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VOLUME II.



G O O C H

ON SOME OF THE

MOST IMPORTANT DISEASES

PECULIAR TO

WOMEN;

WITH OTHER PAPERS.

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*Prefatory Essay*

BY

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## PREFATORY ESSAY.

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THE present volume was published thirty years ago, at a time when there was no English work on this branch of medicine, which could satisfy the craving of those who hungered and thirsted after knowledge of some of the most appalling diseases incident to human nature.

Except where the highest principles are concerned, a decade makes the mass of scientific discoveries and opinions old. What is enunciated as, and proved to be, a truth, is rapidly absorbed into the sum of truths already secured; the labour of a life is crushed into a formula which, in proportion as it becomes current and useful, ceases to be instructive: all those fine processes by means of which the ore was extracted and minted are laid aside and forgotten. Thus it has been with the opinions of Gooch, which, by clearing away the obscurities of the subjects he has discussed, have imparted so much certainty to thought and action, that we have almost ceased to be conscious of the daylight he shed on them, by reason of the very largeness and commonness of its diffusion. I conceive, therefore, that this Society has done well in putting into the hands of the student this volume, which will enable him to mark, and if possible appropriate, the methods by which a mind like Gooch's worked; thus affording him the occasion by which he in his own day may learn to co-ordinate and transmit his own experience for the benefit of others.



The general features of the work are its pre-eminently practical character, its manly tone, devoid of trash and frippery, an ardent love of truth, a dislike of all confident assertions, an abhorrence of all means which prostitute knowledge to notoriety or to gain.

Gooch's mind was singularly intolerant of error; he was rarely deceived by appearances or misled by the innumerable frauds by which self-love warps our judgment. It was necessary for him to see clearly, otherwise he could not see at all. His ardent temperament, which even a life of suffering could not subdue, made him feel a deep interest in all things with which he came in contact. Hence his powers of attention to, and his firm grasp of a subject—its constant presence to his mind—were the consequences of his mental constitution; always striving to arrive at clear and true results. Besides these characteristics, he had the great gift of knowing, not only his knowledge, but also his ignorance; so that the reader will find that what is left out in the treatment of any of the subjects discussed in this volume was omitted purposely, as unripe and insufficient. The lacunæ were indicated for time and other labourers to fill up.

These various traits, which I have noticed as observable in his written works, were tenfold more apparent in his conversation, which was singularly forcible, both as to expression and illustration; and so totally devoid of all assumption of superiority, that one soon felt assured of an excellent and sympathising listener on any subject one had at heart, the sum of one's knowledge of which was speedily laid bare under his rare talent of questioning and suggestive comment.

A physician, thrown as he is amid scenes of mental and corporeal suffering, often becomes involved in advising

the living as well as in caring for the dying. In such a capacity Gooch was pre-eminent; for no one possessed in greater force than himself the two qualities which are essential to form a good adviser, viz., the interest to get up his subject, and the 'esprit juste' to decide on it.

Gooch was no mere chronicler of so-called facts, but an historian who could see in the very germ the laws by which the subject was evolved: a very few cases set his penetrating intellect on the true track. He worked by insight rather than sight, intensively rather than extensively. "The period of my life," he says, "when I improved most rapidly, was when I gained clear and orderly notions of the objects of examination. The faculty of observation requires rather to be guided than to be sharpened: the finger soon gains the power of feeling when the mind has acquired the knowledge of what to feel for." The converse of the proposition is no less true; for at no time of his life is the physician's mind more stagnant than when it is overwhelmed by the 'multa' rather than concentrated on the 'multum'—when his prerogative of seeing much is levelled to that of a routinist or of a nurse—whose mental vision is blinded by seeing many things.

It is this love of truth, this necessity for clear conceptions, which make the methods adopted by Gooch in the treatment of any subject so instructive. The whole is presented to us in so lucid a form, its parts so well proportioned, that the laws by which it was developed in the master's mind run the hazard of escaping the attention of the student.

Up to Gooch's time, nothing which could satisfy was known as to puerperal fever. At the bed-side it was a toss-up what would be the issue of opinions and treatment, when there was no solid base to rest upon; and yet



the necessity of action was instant—the disease the most appalling—the occasion, with all its accompaniments, individual and social, the most absorbing in all its interests which the physician could contemplate. Such a state of things was intolerable to a mind so constituted as was that of Gooch, which could not bear to be lurching here and there amid a storm of conflicting opinions. Was the disease really one, varying merely in degree; or were there many, each one differing in kind? Such was the problem to be solved, and the student will do well to mark the process by which Gooch is guided to its solution, for the method is of general application. “To determine (he says,) whether any two similar maladies are the same, four things are essential to be known:—1, A knowledge of causes—2, Symptoms—3, Effects of remedies—4, Morbid appearances.”

Before applying to his own experience, Gooch appeals to the experience of others, and the rapid historical survey he takes is a model of critical investigation. Not only is there an outline of the opinions of his predecessors, but the right of each to hold such opinions, as estimated by his mental aspects and his opportunities, is brought to bear on the solution of this intricate problem. With regard to causes, nothing satisfactory to Gooch was found; hence this element is set aside. The investigation of the influence of the other three criteria, however, establishes the following canon:—Symptoms and morbid appearances afford only probable grounds for the identity of diseases—Effects of remedies, conclusive grounds. “The effects of remedies (he says,) on a disease, if accurately observed, form the most important part of its history. They are like chemical tests, frequently detecting important differences in objects which previously appeared exactly

similar." I have elsewhere stated my belief that the neglect of this canon, that is, the neglect of therapeutics, and the almost exclusive attention to dead instead of to living pathology, both on the Continent and with us, has led to the existence of Homœopathy.

Under this test, Gooch discovered that puerperal fevers were many, requiring varying modes of treatment. The merit of this dogma will be appreciated, if the student will endeavour to realise the state of professional opinion and practice at the time it was enunciated. We have now to deal so rarely with fevers of an inflammatory type, that Gooch's practice, and indeed that of his contemporaries, appears heroic even to exaggeration. You are directed to bleed to faintness from a large orifice—to encourage the collapse by the upright posture—to resort to a second bleeding—then to relays of leeches, and to twenty grains of calomel, followed by half an ounce of salts every other hour until purging was superinduced. All this was to be done at the instant of attack, if possible; life hinged on the vigour of a timely practice.

If ever there were a temptation to be one-sided, here it existed. The profession and the public believed in these gigantic measures, and believed in nothing short of them; immunity was certain, even on failure, in a course judged by Gooch's contemporaries as the only possible one. It required a singular combination of qualities to enable a man thus associated, and thus acting, to perceive truth, in spite of the authority of his age, and in the teeth of his own habits and successes. But I must not, by epitomising, defraud the reader of the profit and pleasure of witnessing, in the essays on puerperal fever, the modes by which Gooch established its varieties. The largeness of his views—the subtleness of his comments—his earnest reverence for the trust reposed in the physician for the



safeguard of human life—his ceaseless activity in alleviating human suffering—his strong appeal against indifference and apathy—cannot fail to awaken, and I believe to strengthen, the best resolves.

I have stated that Gooch did not touch on the *causes* of puerperal fever. The subject was unripe. A rational humoral pathology which solves this question was unknown in our schools. In Germany the doctrine of the vitality of the blood, though always maintained by these, the greatest of European physiologists, yet had little influence on the dogmas of practical medicine. In France the experiments which proved irrefragably the changes in the life of the blood, were barely commenced in Gooch's time, and were not seen in all their import, either in France or here, till later. The labours of Gaspard, Dance, Tonellé, Majendie, and Cruveilhier were entirely unknown to Gooch, and although they pointed very distinctly to the cause of puerperal fever, yet the scattered and diffused light demanded concentration in order to afford a distinct view. In our own country, his indefatigable industry, zeal, and vast accumulation of facts, had led Dr. Robert Lee to place the cause of puerperal fever in inflammation of the veins; that is, in the solids.

Twenty years ago my position as physician to the General Lying-in Hospital forced on me the reconsideration of the malady which was ravaging that Institution from year to year, and led to the publication of an Essay embodying the following conclusions:—

1. The phenomena of puerperal fever originate in a vitiation of the fluids.
2. The causes which are capable of vitiating the fluids are particularly rife after childbirth.
3. The various forms of puerperal fever depend on this one cause, and may readily be deduced from it.

Under the first head I showed how all the accidents

of puerperal fever may be artificially produced by vitiating the blood. By a comparison of a variety of series of facts, I found that in puerperal fever there were two sources at least of blood vitiation: 1, The direct insertion of noxious matter into a vein; 2, Mechanical injury to the solid walls of the blood-vessels, inducing the products of inflammation, which products being conveyed into the torrent of the circulation, act, as in the first case, as blood-infectants. I indicated, moreover, a third source of blood-poisoning by inhalation, adducing in corroboration facts from my own experience, since fully confirmed by others, of fatal disease in the children and attendants of those who had died of puerperal fever.

Under the second head,—that the causes capable of vitiating the blood are very rife in childbed,—I showed that both the above sources of vitiating, viz., noxious matters and mechanical injury, existed in the condition of the puerperium.

I examined Cruveilhier's doctrines of the analogy between an amputated stump and the uterine placental surface as accounting for the similarity of diseases ensuing respectively on amputation and child-birth, and the general result to which I was led was, that the phenomena of puerperal fever are not peculiar to lying-in women—that the malady is not a fever *sui generis*.

How a variety of fevers, requiring each a differing treatment, might be produced by one cause—for the laws governing these varieties—for the action of accessorial causes in epidemics, and for other subjects connected with or arising out of the main topic: for these points I must refer the reader to the original work, the notice of which I have obtruded on him here, merely as a link in the history of puerperal fever.



When, after a long lapse of years, I look back on these my earlier efforts, I see no cause to modify opinions which have now, I believe, merged into the current doctrines of the day. A discussion on the nature and treatment of puerperal fever, which has just taken place in France—(“De la Fièvre Puerpérale de sa Nature et de son Traitement.” 1858. Paris 8vo.)—under the sanction of the Imperial Academy of Medicine, has attracted my attention, not only by the vigorous display of polemic talent, but by the enunciation of doctrines and results at the present moment which I had advocated a quarter of a century ago.

Content to remain within the pale of their own genial activities and rich literature, the French, unlike the Germans, rarely glance at the labours of foreigners; hence I cannot but accept the coincidences of opinion common to them and me as confirmations of results arrived at by independent workers in a common field.

There is, however, a series of facts detailed which deserve every attention; those in which the lesions of puerperal fever appear in the foetus *in utero* communicated through the maternal system. These facts of reciprocal action of mother and child, as evinced in syphilis and other contaminating diseases, should be stored up as likely to explain, at no distant day, the latent processes of hereditary malady.

Gooch, during the latter years of his life, devoted much time to the study of mental disease.—Such was the closeness of his watch over ‘public’ cases, and such the felicity of his analysis, that the Chancellor of the day referred the most intricate and important of these to his practised judgment. Not only was he employed by the highest legal functionary in thus aiding him in clearing away the

obscurities which darkened these questions; but he did not hesitate to bring into public view cases in which he conceived individuals to have been falsely charged with madness. Had he lived to have watched over public interests, the vigour of his lash would have prevented the intrusion of much, which has since rendered the subject of mental disorder a study full of contradictions and confusion.

The cause assigned for puerperal mania is traced by Gooch to those laws of metamorphic change which have since been known as laws of organic evolution and involution. The growth of the uterus and its appendages during gestation, and their relapse to their pristine condition after it, are accompanied, as are all organic changes, by great development of nerve-force. Hence the extreme impressionability of women during childbearing. The demand on the blood for the supply to the foetus, and, subsequent to birth, to the infant; the lochial discharges—in a word, the general conditions of gestation, may readily induce debility. It is on this stage of 'excitement without power,' that Gooch bases his theory of puerperal mania, and thence deduces his indications of treatment, so opposed as that treatment was to the depletory system of his contemporaries.

Since the publication of this essay, other causes of a toxic nature, as albuminuria and purulent infection, have been recognised as incitants of mania.

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From the chapter on insanity, considered as an object of moral science, the student may replenish his armoury with weapons necessary to meet the attacks of those, who, even at the present moment, contend that the knowledge

of the physician is unnecessary and non-essential to the treatment of mental malady. If it be possible ever to rescue this most difficult of subjects from the audacity of diletantéism or from ignorant philanthropy, Gooch's arguments should do so.

At first sight Gooch may seem to rely, too exclusively, on corporeal treatment, banishing the moral; but a collation of his views will show this idea to be erroneous, as his tenth case proves. So long as we acknowledge the 'commercium,' or fellowship of mind with body, so long must we not dare to neglect their reciprocal influence in the treatment of mania. The battle between Somatist and Spiritualist is an idle strife. The whole theory of morals is based on the postulate, that the mind is susceptible of change by spiritual agencies. The foundations of education repose on the fact of mental nourishment for mental development. A course of ethics is more likely to enlighten our morals than any alterative virtues of sarsaparilla; and the discipline of old Euclid will scarcely be displaced in elucidation of geometric truth by the quintessence of any pharmacopœia. Look on the brain, as *the organ* of thought, and we adopt a *theory* with all its consequences—and the Iliad, the Paradise Lost, the deliciæ of Shakespeare and Dante, become mere cerebral secretions. Say that the brain is the *medium* by which we think, and we express a simple fact devoid of all theory, consonant with what we know of every other force in nature, namely, that not one is manifested to us except through a medium; its own essence is behind the generated phenomena, in a world divined, but not seen nor felt.

Beside these general arguments on the side of the Spiritualist, the sudden return to sanity of the insane, so frequently witnessed, is in accordance with the laws of



mental change, and admits of no better explanation than that which accounts for our sudden conviction.

Organic chemistry is too tardy in its exhibition of molecular action to afford the faintest aid in explaining the advent of that inner ray, which, in the twinkling of an eye, dispels the gloom of the disordered mind; still less will it account for those flashes from genius which lighten and guide mankind from age to age in its conflict with the moral and the material world.

Gooch has barely opened the great question as to the nature of insanity, when he demurs to the legal definition of it, as consisting in "insane belief." The belief may be rational and well-founded, but it may still exercise an undue action on feeling and conduct, breaking up those finer judgments and processes of thought by which the sound mind is regulated.

I myself have never been able to approach nearer to the doctrine of moral insanity than by means of the slender clue here afforded.

Since Gooch's time, his theory, together with that of monomania, have either been created or have assumed a prominence which has startled, if it has not convinced, the public mind. Both theories are derivatives of that larger one which considers the various *modes* of mind, under the abstract term of 'faculty,' each faculty (imagination, judgment, attention, perception, &c.) being a separate entity, having a definite portion of the brain for its seat or organ. Willis, Pinel, Gall, and Spurzheim are the originators of this view of mental organization, but, though they have largely influenced the opinions of specialists, they have not induced any metaphysician of note to adopt the metaphysical portion, nor any anatomist of name to adopt the anatomical portion of their system. Moreover, no two of the originators of this 'schema' are agreed either as to

the number of our faculties or of their supposed seats in the brain. Indeed, if we take any or all of these organs, as mapped by their authors, the mechanism of the mental machine will on trial speedily come to a dead-lock. It will be impossible to account for a page of human thought, or to track through its wheelwork the sequence of actions which any single hour of human existence may score.

This is not the place to enter fully into the discussion of so large a subject as the nature and aspects of insanity ; nevertheless, a few comments may direct attention to doctrines which, though current, are too paradoxical to be received by the legist with favour.

If the mind is to be considered as the composite of faculties or organs, each a power in itself, and having each a material seat for the manifestation of that power, it follows that any one or more of these organs may become the seat, or seats, of disease, leaving the others intact and sane. Here we flounder at once against an insufficient nomenclature. That division of insanity, of Heinroth's, which Prichard considers and adopts as the best, acknowledges only mania and monomania—the madness of all the organs, or of one ; but Marc and others give instances of two and more ‘monomaniacs, co-existing with a mass of sound organs ; proving at least this—that the subject which has so insufficient a nomenclature is ill-defined and illogical. As long as the single organ affected with insanity was of a subordinate rank in the intellectual hierarchy, the doctrine of monomania did not attract much notice. But when it is asserted that there is an “organ of volition,” and that the ‘will’ can go mad, and thus present us with the theory of moral insanity, the case is very different. This theory asserts that a man may be of sound understanding, and yet, in spite of his reason, against his conscience, and with a struggling will, is compelled, for exam-

ple, to commit homicide. It is clear that under such a theory no distinction between bad and mad is possible. If the theory be just, a counsel may lay claim to impunity for his client, by asserting that, though his reason rebelled against the deed, though his conscience abhorred it, yet under a mad organ of volition the unfortunate gentleman shot down his neighbour, for whom at the instant of homicide he entertained the highest respect.

Is the theory tenable? No doubt that all morals are based on the doctrine of 'free-will.' Nothing can be imputed to man, as good or bad, in which his will is *compelled*, or does not participate. In so far, then, as the theory of moral insanity implies a compulsion, however enforced, it is sound. But what is an organ of volition, which, like an organ of sense, may become in itself and separately the seat of disease, and manifest disorder of function? The will is the *person*, it is ourselves in action or effort. We do not make our sensations; we cannot forge our convictions; we are compelled to see the object before the open eye, as we are compelled to acknowledge the truth of a geometrical problem. The powers of sensation and of reason are great and beneficent endowments, which we use, but do not create; but we are accountable for every act of the will, inasmuch as it is we ourselves, and no other, who create and produce them. To say, then, that there is an organ of volition separated from the Ego, the 'self,' the 'person,' as the organ of vision, which conveys the matter of vision, is separated from the mind percipient of it, is to assert that there are impersonal volitions, acts of the will which belong to nobody—which rise spontaneously by some inexplicable irritation of the supposed organ. Such an organ so acting independently of the person is a pure nonentity, and an involuntary volition, an absurdity.



The passions and appetites, in their disordered actions, have been brought under this same theory of moral insanity, I think equally objectionably. It is asserted that they may act isolatedly, and become mad and rampant amid the serenity of a calm intellect, and in spite of right judgments. A sudden impulse to motiveless murder, for example, may at any moment turn the hand of a father against the child, or compel the husband to slaughter the wife, at the very instant that he warns her to escape. The analysis requisite to show the largeness of assumption in this theory, to point out the looseness of narrative of the facts adduced in favour of it, would be out of place here.

I may state that there is no 'passion' without arousing mental phenomena. Lust has its images of dalliance; hate its malevolent emotions; avarice its crooked, grasping thoughts and mean persistencies; ambition and honour their issues, the nobility and worth of which are measured by motives. Whether these active "affections" are accompanied by bodily sensations or not, is not the question. The point is, whether the appetites and passions ever exist without that mental armature which in the sane state we are certain forms their very essence, and is necessary to their fruition. The suddenness of an impulse may be granted. We know, however, only two conditions of mind in which this suddenness appears; viz., in the impulses of the madman, and in those of the criminal.\* The moment the insane entertain 'suspicion,' that moment the sequences of passion follow: first fear, then hatred of the objects of that fear, and, on the earliest occasion, destruction of that which, in his insane belief, the maniac thinks will relieve him of the burden of terror; there is

\* This not being an exhaustive analysis, I have selected 'suspicion' as the commonest of those mental states through which the harmless maniac passes before he becomes dangerous.

no lack of motive, therefore, in accounting for the impulses of madness.

When we see one who outwardly had hitherto stood well in the world's opinion, suddenly leap into the gulf of crime, our first desire is to examine the inner life of the man, and the investigation results in our finding either the evidences of madness, or the manifestations of depravity, in a long dalliance with criminal thoughts which have recurred again and again, entertained and repelled, with lessening horror, till the understanding becomes bewildered, the conscience silenced, and the will overpowered by the vehement temptation of the hour. Mentally the man had long been a criminal.

Such are the two conditions under which the impulsive passions of anger, fear, lust, &c., have hitherto been known to operately suddenly and dangerously. But now we are asked to acknowledge the existence of a third, under which there shall be exhibited the effects of passion without any of its motives, and the effects of madness in the presence of a perfectly sound intellect. As a Commissioner of Pentonville Prison, I had abundant opportunities of learning the natural history, so to speak, of crime, and its relation to mental disorder; and, without ransacking the labours of divine or moralist, or turning to the workings of our own hearts, I am convinced that the law of continuity is no more broken in the moral than it is in the physical world; and that a man in the plenitude of his intellect, entire in his moral judgment as to right and wrong, suddenly filled with unwonted and motiveless lust of murder, is a monstrosity, the existence of which must not be received without the most searching inquest.

Some of the difficulties which embarrass us in the study of mental disorder are, I think, to be traced, first, to an ambiguous nomenclature; and, secondly, to a premature

search after the cause of mental phenomena. Thus, the term monomania, substituted by Esquirol for the older one of melancholia, becomes in Prichard's hands, 'partial derangement of the understanding:' hence, instead of the understanding being crazed *on one subject*, we have it crazed *in one part*—and by implication therefore sound in others. The searching after causes of mental phenomena, instead of adhering to the Baconian injunction of observing their laws, is hazardous. At this instant almost all our knowledge of the nervous system is transitionary and incomplete. The import of the nerve-tube and its contents is still a desideratum; no one has traced a fibril from periphery to centre. The value and co-ordination of electricity in its relation to nerve-force, is, even in the hands of Bois-Reymond, a mere sketch. Under Brown Séquard the posterior spinal columns have been dispossessed of their supposed power of transmitting sensation. Surely, where the very rudimentary knowledge is so scanty and so uncertain, it is a large demand on our faith to ask us to believe that a finger may be laid on the very patch of cerebral pulp which generated the immortalities of the 'Principia;' and that on the right hand and on the left we can assign limits by rule and compass to other portions of brain, as the officinæ or workshops of the poet and mechanician.

Besides, to expect that the perception of the manifestations of the moral world shall be modelled on a plan similar to that of the material, as seen in the sensory ganglia, is scarcely permissible: for what analogy is there between the two orders of phenomena—between the odour of a rose and our notions of futurity—between bitterness of taste and bitterness of heart—between the oscillations on the tympanum and the thoughts which are conveyed from soul to soul, and which the waves of air but typify.



Even in the material world many cosmic powers influence the mind through organic tissues not fashioned after those of the senses: thus gravitation, though always present, is chiefly cognizable by muscular effort.

However I will not dwell more on a subject which, I trust, may find a more competent exponent than myself.

The few remarks I have hazarded are offered with all respect for the talents of the founder of the theory of moral insanity, and for those of his followers. I have often made it a subject of anxious thought—often sat down, pen in hand, to master its (I must say) loose definitions and looser narratives\*—and as often have risen impressed with the feeling that there must be grave errors where the premises merge into such a mass of paradoxes. I have been astonished to find how many of the cases adduced rest on mere assertions of *et ipse vidi*—and how often the facts narrated show that the conduct of the maniac, supposed to be urged by a mad *will* only, is really the result of a mad *understanding*, filled with delusive ideas and insane judgments. I have never seen a single example, in my public or private practice, of a case answering to the definition of moral insanity; nor have I been more fortunate in my appeal to the experience of others; for of my colleagues and friends none have been able to point to a moral maniac. In our courts of law where he is paraded, there is always the spectacle of a

\* As an instance I beg the reader to turn to page 42 of Prichard's work, for details of a model case (No. 4) of "moral insanity and high excitement, which never displayed *any sign of intellectual madness*." Within a dozen lines after such a heading he will find the pathic described as "wild, exciteable, thoughtless, full of schemes and *absurd* projects." A little further on, this moral maniac with unscathed intellect insists on examining a farm, which he is about to take, at night, by the help of a lantern.

jury acquitting, in the teeth of the judicial conviction and summary, by a verdict resting on a hopelessly confused array of medical opinions strongly opposed to each other.

These acquittals are known to result from the unwillingness to entertain the question of capital punishment where there is the shadow of a doubt; although that doubt may be based on nothing bearing on the facts. The general result to society is very disastrous. A life is lost, and, if taken under a paroxysm of ferocity and cruelty, that very ferocity is the plea urged for acquittal—‘No man in his sound mind could so act;’ this man, therefore, is morally insane. Freed from the gallows as irresponsible, he is consigned to a madhouse, whence he could be let loose on society by virtue of a medical certificate of returning sanity, did not that community which proclaims his irresponsibility tacitly agree to regard him as a criminal, and enforce an imprisonment, under the fiction of the Royal pleasure, for the ‘natural period of the life of the homicide.’ That this last judgment, to which society invariably reverts, is the right one, is proved, if we compare results. The genuine madman who is homicidal, may be as dangerous in, as he was out of confinement; for, as the impulse arises anywhere, so it is always to be expected, watched, and guarded against. The case is very different with the moral maniac, in which class there is not an example, that I can find recorded, of a return of this fit of ‘instinctive’ homicide, *after* trial and incarceration. His conduct is very like that of any sane man, who, having had a narrow escape from the gallows, and entertaining a wholesome dread of its effects, eschews everything which may again bring it in view. The whole subject of insanity, in its medico-legal aspects, is at this instant involved in contradictions, issuing, I believe, from the assumption of a

wrong theory of mental phenomena, the result of a vain attempt to determine their causes, instead of noting their laws.

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Another, and a very original chapter, on the subject of disease of the nervous system, is given by Gooch, under the title "Of the Irritable Uterus." I believe he was the first to call attention to a malady of greater import than he himself suspected, and which, even yet, is regarded as almost an isolated disease, having little connexion with those uterine affections, now so rife, and so well known. This comparative neglect on the part of the profession is attributable, mainly, to the belief that Gooch had not all the elements of a just diagnosis, which have existed since his time, as afforded by the 'speculum.'

Gooch describes a malady, of which the essential symptom is pelvic pain, subsisting even for years, thoroughly incapacitating the patient for the performance of many of the duties of life, and yet unaccompanied by any appreciable structural change. The disease thus described is an undoubted reality: many of those from whom Gooch took his views I have seen, and some few are yet alive to prove how long this obscure malady adhered to all the modifications of structure and function incident to advancing age. I have repeatedly examined with the speculum the seat of pain, and as often been satisfied that it is independent of any vascular complication. In those who are most obnoxious to this form of the disease, there is frequently an hereditary taint of gout or rheumatism, or they are the offspring of very nervous parents, themselves exhibiting the nervous temperament in excess. One



of the seats of this neuralgic malady is the vagina itself, which is so exquisitely tender as to render intercourse intolerable: indeed, in several instances, this condition has led to separation, and the unbalanced nervous power has been the index to greater evils, merging in insanity. It is this form which Gooch has described so ably; separating it from all inflammatory disease, whether chronic or acute, and, by analogy afforded by similar affections in other parts of the body, classifying it with disorder of the nervous function. There is, however, another form, or rather another degree of it, which he has not described, but which, in our time, all have had opportunities of witnessing who have noted those instances, which have of late been so largely multiplied, and which are the despair of the practitioner and the bane of many a domestic circle. In this series, the purely nervous aspect of the malady is marked by some obvious change in the uterus or its appendages; but this change is by no means a constant one, either in its seat, extent, or nature. Sometimes there is a congested condition of the uterus, altering its shape into that of a retort; the enlarged and curved fundus being exquisitely sensitive of pressure. At other times the cervix, or some portion of the uterine walls, is the seat of congestion, of varying consistency, and of pain. In other instances, the uterus may be entirely healthy, but the pain is referred to either ovary, or to some obscure spot of the pelvis itself. I have known the same general train of symptoms co-exist with every form of uterine ulceration, and without any of them; with every degree of uterine infiltration, and without any one of them. In a word, the local changes have been the fluctuating, the nervous affection the constant element: in it, therefore, and in no doctrine of a phlogistic origin, can I place the essence of

this strange disease. Under a notion of its local origin, I have now had abundant opportunities of seeing the effects of local treatment, ranging between the use of the actual cautery, through various modes of caustication, to that of a simple astringent, or even watery injection: all have failed to cure, and often even to alleviate the pain. Those who are thus affected go from specialist to specialist, and generally, after years of trial and endless expense, subside into invalid habits, unrelieved; or they gradually wear out the disease. The majority recover sooner or later; but there are others who perish from some form of innutrition and defective sanguification, the commonest being phthisis and that kind of chronic rheumatism which attacks the small joints, gradually crippling the hands and feet first, before it extends to the larger joints, or disorganizes the heart.

The two commonest local lesions incident to this malady are ovarian cyst and a large hypertrophied uterus; with the advent of these the painful symptoms cease.

This malady, I believe, is deeply rooted in the very essence of that complex organic function termed the generative, which, in its most comprehensive sense, includes no inconsiderable portion of the moral as well as the physical development of the female organization. By whatever name that controlling power may be called—whether *nisus formativus*, or any other expression indicative of nerve-force—whatever may be the seat of this power, whether cerebrum, cerebellum, or medulla oblongata, which co-ordinates the phenomena of the procreative function during the thirty years of woman's life in which it is in activity; it is this co-ordinating power which seems to be in fault in the malady in question, judging from a comparison of its symptoms with the phenomena of the function. In

attempting to establish this comparison, I must premise that the whole tendency of modern physiology is to track every complex function of the body to a central nerve-power; as is well known as to the functions of sensation and motion; more obscurely as to the co-ordination of the heart's action; still more wonderfully in the power of modifying capillary and molecular action, as shown in Bernard's experiments on the sugar-secreting power of the liver.

These centres of power, it is also well known, are reached and called into action by a variety of causes, both internal and external, by malady and by medicament. In the disease before us, though the train of symptoms may be, and often is, evoked by some trivial and varying structural lesion, still after the removal of the supposed cause these symptoms persist—a fact tending to prove that the connecting link between them is rather one of occasion than of necessity. Premising, then, these remarks, I will attempt to show that the range of the malady is co-extensive with the range of the procreative function in its widest sense, as involving both mind and body. The forces which inhere in this complex function assume a sovereignty and control over all others so despotic as to bring into emphatic relief the great law of nature, that the individual life but subserves to that of the continuation of the species—a law by virtue of which every drop of blood necessary to the safety of a sickly mother is used, at her risk, to secure the vigorous nourishment of the unborn offspring. The process of sanguification is deeply involved during half the life of woman in furtherance of the function of generation, which has the power of determining capillary action towards certain organs at definite periods, for a definite time. In some disorders of the generative



system this function exhibits a misplacement of this power in the form of vicarious discharge. In the special one under consideration, the uterus or its appendages assume almost the characters of an erectile tissue. A very slight cause will determine their injection, which becomes persistent; thus I have known the fundus uteri to enlarge in eight hours to double its natural size, immediately after the easy and painless introduction of the uterine sound, and continue thus enlarged, and exquisitely painful for upwards of a year, without any other change in its structure. In other cases the consequences of mechanical and chemical means applied to the cervix have been grave—a pelvic abscess has resulted, with its fearful consequences of purulent infection; hence I have invariably inculcated the greatest reserve in the topical treatment of the irritable uterus. The power of being affected by excited capillary action is not limited to the uterus, from which organ it mostly shifts to either ovary. It is on these two organs—uterus and ovary—that the constant excitation determines disease: in the former, the walls enlarge as in false pregnancy without any internal tumour; in the latter, a cyst forms in a hypertrophied stroma: in both, the climacteric age, if attained, is fraught with danger from hæmorrhage. In many instances there is a marked metastasis of action between the uterus and lungs, as in vicarious menstruation; and when that is perceived, phthisis is one of the terminations of the irritable uterus. Not only is the determination of misplaced capillary action a feature of this malady, but there is a profound alteration in the blood itself; the anæmia is certainly less manageable than that of chlorosis, but the nature of the change in this fluid is unknown to me. Besides this control over the blood, both as to its circulation and its composition, the process

of nutrition is in many interfered with by a depravity of appetite, which is much more persistent than that so common in the caprices of pregnancy. In one instance, my patient ate nothing but grapes and bread for twelve months, and presented a degree of emaciation apparently incompatible with life. The weakness terminated in coma, or rather in a trance-like state which lasted two days, from which she awoke free from unnatural appetites, and in six weeks was well; she is now a wife and a mother. In another instance, coffee was the chief staple of food, nearly everything else being vomited up. The former patient had been recumbent two years, the latter eight, when I saw them.

The modifications of the moral nature of woman are as profound, though not so apparent, as that of her physical, during the procreative period. The heightened sensibilities, the awakened fancy, the necessity of attracting sympathy, the abnegation of self in the entireness of devotion to the offspring, the development of the passion of fear, in its various aspects, which maternal solicitude engenders and keeps up, sharpening the perceptive faculties, and investing the forebodings of the mother with all but the keenness of prophetic vision, these finer developments of the moral force, which are essential to functions delegated to woman, in order to secure the protection of man and the safety of the offspring—these, I say, become strangely distorted in the malady before us. The desire of sympathy assumes the most inordinate proportions, and the patient clings to any one who, from whatever motive, will afford it. They who do not respond, whether parent, or brethren, or husband, become objects of suspicion, or of dislike. The family circle is divided or broken up, and there is a desire to seek away from home



that comfort which the "femme incomprise" imagines is banished from it. Not a few instances were known by me of persons, who, though morally and physically totally incapable of the task, were desirous of leaving their couch to nurse our soldiers in the Crimea. The passion of fear makes these sufferers dwell incessantly on the pain they feel, and the love of sympathy renders a communication of their sufferings a necessity. Like all maladies in which the moral force is attacked, there is the danger of its spreading by imitation. In most cases these patients remain incumbent for months or years. Her room is the family gathering-place, in which everything is discussed and determined: the choice of a habitation—the tether of travel—the cultivation of society—in a word, all freedom of thought and action in the family, becomes pivoted on the conditions of this distressing and formidable disease.

The malady is not confined to the rich or the single; when it attacks the wife and the mother, all the social evils which accrue are multiplied a hundred-fold. The erotic element is in most cases entirely extinguished. All intercourse is dreaded or loathed, at the very instant when the victim, under the passion for sympathetic commiseration, is ready to give up her whole soul to the first acquaintance, nurse, or practitioner, who will listen and pity. They who have been able to watch this real and most formidable malady through years, have many a tale to tell—of husbands estranged, children neglected, and home stripped of all its holiest influences, authority delegated to strangers and abused, ill-assorted marriages, expenditure stretched for health's sake to its extreme limits, harassing from the uncertainty of the demand which throws the responsibility of life on him who refuses to honour it.

Even they who recover from the disease retain many

of those habits formed during its acute stages, which in themselves become substantive, though secondary evils. Thus there is risk from the use and abuse of stimulants and sedatives formerly essential. Then the long habit of recumbency diminishes the power of muscular exertion; while the dreamy condition of mind arising out of it, gives a false direction to all moral activities. Very few are the same beings after, that they were before the ingress of this disease. As to the treatment of this malady, I adopt the general views and indications given us by Gooch. The theory I have promulgated to account for its complex phenomena, I regard merely as an expression by which the disease is affirmed to be of nervous origin, affecting body and mind, and requiring other than mere topical measures. Whenever the local complications are clear and urgent, local means cannot be dispensed with. Unfortunately the passion of fear and the desire of sympathy render these patients, as a class, dissatisfied with any but such means of cure as they think are commensurate with the magnitude of their malady, and worthy of the spirit of martyrdom within them, which makes the most heroic measures the most welcomed. They suffer and, strange to say, they love to dwell on and promulgate their sufferings; hence, he that does most locally is most prized and retained, till another promises to do more, when the former idol is cast down, and another set up in its place. There is no disease in which moral influence exercises a greater power on the high-wrought sensibilities which are its essence: a kind or a harsh word, a casual phrase, will strengthen or cut short the usefulness of the best practitioner.

The exaggerated fear of "ulceration," "tumour," &c., induced by the nomenclature of uterine disorders, weighs



heavily on the mind, which will not be appeased until every mode of investigation has been resorted to which can satisfy the alarmed fancy. On the part of the medical attendant, therefore, the greatest reserve is requisite; for generally, not only the patient, but the whole family, are at his feet. Formerly the use of the speculum was all but insisted on, in the case of the young and the unmarried. Now that the scope and means of treatment are better understood by society, this measure as to this class of patients is dispensed with, or resorted to under a tacit understanding of its well-considered necessity. Local measures, I repeat, are not to be set aside. The speculum, therefore, cannot be dispensed with in genuine structural disease demanding topical treatment; but its use crushes so much of all that is feminine, that I know no measure which so imperatively compels an honest answer to the question, "Would you, under existing circumstances, resort to this expedient were the patient your daughter, sister, or wife?" That answer must be left to each man to make before his own conscience, and justify to society by his scientific attainments.

In this malady of the irritable uterus, I believe, the greatest amount of benefit is attained from general, and the greatest risk of mischief incurred from topical treatment.

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The essay on uterine polypi must still be considered one of the best in our medical literature, for clinical purposes. Whoever can so master, as to use its contents, will scarcely meet in practice with much that will be new to him. The seat of these growths, their variety, the symptoms



engendered, the remedy, are so clearly laid down, that nothing remains for the practitioner but action.

The chief recent additions to our knowledge of uterine polypi are as to their intimate structure and classification—in a word, their natural history—which resolves itself into that of fibroids. Any of the received manuals of histology\* will afford the student ample information as to the microscopic anatomy of fibrous tumours, together with the usual amount of discussion and dispute as to almost every theoretic deduction in this world “*de minimis*.”

He may safely neglect, therefore, all research after causes of accidental tissues, which will be revealed only when we know what are the causes of life. He need not throw away much time in seeking for the reasons of the peculiar form of polypi, or for their supposed origin from the vital impetus given to uterine structure by a stray ovule entangled in its meshes diverting the processes of local nutrition, as the cynips diverts those of the oak-leaf in the formation of the gall-nut. He may entertain, as an incentive to further inquiry, Velpeau's dictum, that all morbid products tend to take on the characteristic structure of the organ in which they are found. These, and a hundred other questions of the natural history of disease, may afford good mental discipline, and possess much interest, as propounded by the great masters of transcendental anatomy; but the logic of philosophic medicine is so different from that of clinical—the working faculties, by means of which truth is attained in each, are so differently grouped—that the risk of becoming disqualified for practical decision is by no means slight, in him who is absorbed

\* The monograph of Dr. A. Farre, on the Anatomy, &c., of the Uterus, published in “Todd's Encyclopædia of Physiology,” is most worthy of attention, from its copiousness and accuracy, and for its original research.

in these leisurely contemplations of the closet. The serviceable points brought out by the anatomist, however, are all-important to the practitioner.

1. These growths are devoid of all arterial, and possess merely a venous circulation (Cruveilhier). This, however, is too confidently asserted, inasmuch as occasionally even a large artery is found in the stalk of these polypi. The denser fibroids, according to Dr. A. Farre, cannot be injected.

2. Injury to their structure is rapidly followed by a form of decay, like that which is seen in vegetable matter. Nevertheless inflammation ending in suppuration has been known to take place in the very heart of these growths. Their centres are also the occasional seats of softening, of effusion of blood, and of cysts.

3. If they persist throughout a life, they partake more or less of the atrophy of age, common to all tissues, or they become calcareous.

4. Spontaneous cure is rare, and takes place by these tumours detaching themselves from the cellular membrane in which they are imbedded, and either escaping into the cavity of the abdomen, where they are reported (Becquerel) to cause no inconvenience and undergo no change, or dropping through the vagina more or less altered and broken up.

5. The division of fibroid growths according to their seat, into sub-peritoneal, interstitial, and sub-mucous, is eminently practical. From all these three points they disturb the circulation; least so from the first; more so, and even dangerously, from the two last.

6. Their presence generally is the occasion of partial or general uterine hypertrophy, increased vascularity, augmented sensibility in the pelvic organs, and displacement.

7. Medical treatment is for the most part only palliative.



The cases of interstitial fibroid which I have sent to the absorbent thermal springs have been benefited by the reduction of the size and vascularity of the uterus, but not in the diminution of that of the tumours themselves.

As hæmorrhage is the chief source of danger, so the chief indication is to prevent it. One of the greatest of surgical authorities of modern times, a man who united in greatest power, thought, manual dexterity, well-weighed audacity, unfailing resource, and immense experience,—Dupuytren,—declares interstitial fibroids to be “inoperable.” They may be multiple, or too large, or too near the peritoneal cavity; or they may require the uterine walls to be largely cleft; in a word, the operation of enucleation, from our ignorance, in most cases, of all the sources of danger, or from our knowledge of some, is too hazardous to be warranted. When it has been successful, the tumour has been near or in the neck of the uterus; and even here the risks of operation are very great, and can only be incurred in the presence of the certainty of death from hæmorrhage. Where no operation is possible, it is a great object to carry on the patient to and through the critical age.

The flooding in interstitial fibroid is uterine, and the result of irritation, and certainly ceases for the most part after the climacteric period, leaving the fibroids comparatively innocuous in their action on the constitution. It is difficult to account for it; but the tampon will arrest the hæmorrhage, as was proved in a case which I saw in consultation with Dr. Farre, where the patient was draining to death.

For the submucous fibroids, or true uterine polypi, there can be no hesitation as to their removal as soon as practicable. In this kind of fibroid hæmorrhage is a constant symptom, and independent of size or age. I

have within a few weeks seen, in consultation with Dr. Elliot of Camberwell, an example of polypus of the cervix, with abundant bleeding, at the age of sixty-five. The best modes of removing the polypi resolve themselves into two, —excision and ligature. Some unite the two. The former, however, is, I believe, almost the only one now resorted to by those most conversant with the operation. It was supposed that it entailed the risks of hæmorrhage, which were avoided by the use of the ligature. I have stated Cruveilhier's opinion, that the circulation in the fibroid is venous only: but Dupuytren distinctly says that arteries of good size are found coursing through the centre of the peduncle; but, curiously enough, he adds that they never bleed after excision, which fact he attributes to his mode of ablation by means of a strong pair of scissors which contuse as well as cut. In his two hundred operations, bleeding ensued but twice, and then was readily controlled by the tampon. I have now for many years always excised polypi, and have not seen a single case of hæmorrhage result. This is, I believe, the experience of the profession at large.

The objections against the operation by ligature arise in the great danger of blood-infection from absorption of putrilage, inducing the terrible consequences incident to this mode of poisoning.

Even when the operation is successful, the long delays before the canula can be removed, the necessity of retaining it in the vagina for days, and of restricting the patient to certain positions of the body to prevent the metallic tubes from injuring, or even perforating, the peritoneal cavity, are circumstances which greatly depress and worry her. Then the stench from the decaying polypus is most offensive and intolerable. If therefore, the ligature be used, excision below it should be performed before these changes in the polypus take place.



There are other modes of destroying the polyp, but not of such general use as those mentioned. The best instrument for crushing these growths, when they are not too large, is the dentated spoon-shaped forceps used in removing the bones of the fœtal head after craniotomy; but the same objections apply, though in a minor degree to this, as to the operation by ligature.

I have no experience of the "ecraseur;" but, judging from the mechanism of the instrument, it must be applicable only in the cases where the stalk is easily reached. All these modes of looping the polyp are, as Dupuytren has observed, anything but easy in practice, as is proved by the fact of such a variety of inventions for its accomplishment.

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At the time Gooch published his work, the coma and convulsions of infancy were invariably attributed to inflammation of some portion of the brain; a theory which led to the heroic practice of bleeding from the jugular, to copious leeching and rapid mercurialization. The doctrine of the reflex function of the nerves, and the pathology of tubercular meningitis were, as yet, entirely unknown.

Unless we believe that a remedy can be persisted in when it invariably fails, we must admit that this depletory system, which at that day was generally resorted to throughout Europe, was not as injurious as it is in our own time. I have shown in my essay on puerperal fever, that the type of febrile disease varies at various periods, and that the same group of symptoms will require at different epochs a different treatment. With regard to hydrocephalus, I remember well how rapidly the head symptoms were removed under the vigorous handling of the best

practitioners of a former day, and I recollect also how quickly the black and dry tongue of typhus was cleansed by the lancet. I witnessed in Edinburgh the treatment of scarlatina by enormous bleedings, which seemed to be the only means of arresting suffocation from the rapid swelling of the fauces. The routinist and grosser observers of that day, having but the one maxim, that what is right *now* is right always, continued a method of treatment long after the conditions of its success had passed away. It was not so with Gooch, whose fine powers of observation and penetration led him to rank the influence of differences quite as highly as that of analogies. He had no faith in easy and universal formulæ—"Bleed and save"—"Brandy or death." These sovereign remedies and facile principles he was content to postpone to the more laborious process of observation, and his paper on the Cerebral Affections of Infancy, though confessedly behind our present state of knowledge, is a remarkable instance of what an honest and sagacious mind can effect when it is unwarped by preconceived notions. Gooch was satisfied, from his own experience, that there were cases of hydrocephalus and coma which did not bear depletion—nay, sank under it. He immediately ransacked the medical literature of his day, to discover how far the experience of others bore out his own views, and found in the experiments of Kelly, and in the doctrines and instances of Marshall Hall and Abercrombie, that effusion into the ventricles might take place under two opposite conditions of the circulation; nay, even his own sensations and wretched health are utilised to eke out his proposition:—"Any one, who from long defect in the organs of nutrition, is reduced so that he has neither flesh on his body nor blood in his veins, well knows what it is to lay down his head and doze away half the day without



any congestion or inflammation of the brain." The sketch is from nature, and easily recognised by those who, having the privilege of his intimacy, were often near his couch in his freer hours, and partook of the charm of a converse filled with feeling and intellect, where every kind of subject was touched with the lightness and strength of a master hand.

Gooch arrived at the following classification of the various forms of cerebral affection of infancy :—

1. A form depending on nervous exhaustion, curable by means which support the system.

2. A form marked by the sudden effusion of serum, depending on a state of circulation the opposite to congestion and inflammation.

3. A form of coma, the result of inflammation or congestion, requiring active measures of depletion at its very onset.

The mode in which Gooch has defined the second form is highly characteristic of his sagacious mind. He made out that this was a substantive form of malady; but in what essentials it differed from the other two forms he declines giving an opinion. He points out, however, certain differences as to the state of the circulation, and then adds a fact of morbid anatomy, the import of which was not understood till lately. "How far," he says, "our opinion of the nature of the case may be modified by the *white cheesy* substance in the arachnoid membrane—whether the mode of treatment was wrong, or, on the contrary, right, but not prompt and active enough—on these points I shall not offer a conjecture."

We are now aware that of all the sources of hydrocephalus, the presence of tubercle deposited either in the pulp of the brain or on its membranes, is by far

the most common. Simple inflammation with effusion; toxic apoplexy, the result of the poison of scarlatina and measles; the coma and convulsion of albumenuria, and infantile diabetes, are more or less apparent, and not difficult of diagnosis. But the onset of tubercular meningitis is rarely suspected until the case is about to terminate in death. The previous steps of this disease are recognised rather by our regrets than our fears. It is remembered when the issue is at hand, that the temper had long been changing; the head often troubled; the faculties precociously ripened; the disposition uncertain and wayward; the careless activities of childhood curbed and rendered sedate, by causes not indeed unnoticed, but unknown or falsely interpreted, by those whose very affections would tend to warp the judgment which should determine how much to hope for, and what to fear. A few hours at last reveal the insidious nature of a malady which speedily ends in fatal coma, produced by the irritative action of tuberculous matter.

This malady is but an instalment of that greater one known as tuberculosis, which enters so largely into the diseases of infancy, because at no other age are the conditions of its production so rife. During the first ten years of life the vital activities are in their fullest play; there is not only nourishment, but growth. Everywhere there is an incessant demand for plastic matter, and every organ is in a constant state of change and of excitement. The brain especially, according to the laborious researches of the brothers Wenzel, does not increase much after the eighth year. Hence the powerful influence of errors in regimen in determining disease in childhood. Hence the readiness with which exudations take place from the poison of fevers, —the membranous coryza—the false membranes of croup



and diphtheria—the tubular exudations of infantile dysentery. Hence the rapid deposit of “cheesy” matter in acute meseraicis, the result of the so-called infantile remittent fever, a malady which in its severer forms rarely fails to leave a similar deposit on the brain and peritoneum. Hence also the astounding rapidity with which those predisposed to scrofula develop phthisis. I have known tuberculous infiltration of the lung to occur so suddenly and extensively as to be mistaken by a competent stethoscopist for latent pleurisy.

In our workhouses and our factories the various causes which induce exudation are rife, and the effect therefore common.

In the affluent classes, wherever the hygiene of childhood is neglected, or is ordered by the sovereign crotchets of some energetic parent, this malady of tubercular meningitis will creep in; and here I would raise my voice against that pernicious system of brainwork miscalled infantile education. It ignores, or is ignorant of, the laws both of the physical and functional development of this most important organ. It neglects the sequences under which its various faculties appear. It has little regard to the laws under which the senses educe the powers of the brain. It either crushes the imagination, so active in childhood, by a premature development of the reflective faculties; or it overwhelms a faculty which requires no stimulus, by a host of artificial expedients. Hence the greater development of early madness; hence the instances of disproportioned faculties—the wayward will—the unbalanced conduct—the physical exhaustion and cramped development of the body, the result of the contention of inharmonious and disordered powers and passions. The chapter on the early training of childhood is yet to be written; and even

were it at hand, I believe that the errors of the present system are so methodised and enrooted, so many prizes are offered for treading its paths, that few would listen to, and fewer practice its precepts. One of the most thoughtful minds of our time (Sir B. Brodie) in pointing out some of its vices, has all but preferred leaving the brain fallow, to storing it as it now is stored, in infancy and childhood.

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The remaining essays of Gooch require little comment, as they are all but complete in themselves, and not much has been added by later investigators to his contributions.

To many, hæmorrhage with a contracted uterus has appeared an anomaly, and undoubtedly the phenomenon is rare. Nevertheless, it is truly and exactly observed. The classes of cases in which it may occur are,—

1st. After certain blood diseases, as purpura, and its congener, scurvy. I have remarked also that chronic nettlerash, and some other skin diseases, impair the coagulability of the blood, and so induce this kind of hæmorrhage. I am unable to say to what extent albumenuria produces a similar result, although I have remarked that it is a common source of profuse menstruation.

2ndly. It may occur after, and appears to be caused by, cardiac disease in all its forms.

3rdly. It may accompany chronic hepatic disease, induced by a long residence in the tropics.

4thly. I have met with two instances of that form of congenital blood disease, designated by the Germans as "bleeders," and in both the hæmorrhage after labour was frightful, although the uterus was at first firmly contracted. One of these patients imagined herself to be the subject of cerebral congestion, to relieve which she used

to resort to depletion after her own fashion, namely, by running a fine needle into her under lip, from which small wound she collected in a tumbler, in rapid-flowing drops, as much blood as she liked. It required some time and firm pressure to stop the flux. In both these instances there was great toleration of bleeding, and faintness was a distant contingency.

5thly. It may occur in highly nervous and irritable constitutions. Dr. Arthur Farre reminds me that a former patient of mine, who has passed over to his care, always exhibits this form of hæmorrhage under a firmly contracted uterus. He imagines that the very condition of extreme contraction induced by an irritable nervous system is unfavourable to the formation and retention of those natural plugs afforded by coagula in the uterine sinuses. In a word, the uterus dislodges and squeezes out these plugs, so that when the tension of the uterine fibre is relaxed, there is nothing to stop the egress of the blood which such relaxation attracts into the uterine vessels. Remembering the circumstances alluded to in this particular case, I am disposed to accept Dr. A. Farre's solution of the problem.

There are certainly two conditions which enter into the consideration of causes arresting uterine hæmorrhage; 1, the contraction of the uterine fibre; 2, the plugging of the veins by coagula.

The latter appears to be the sole mean of safety in those cases of intense flooding in which the uterus flaps about the hand like a wet towel. Incapable of contraction for hours, yet ceasing to ooze out a drop of blood, there is nothing apparently between life and death but a few soft coagula plugging up the sinuses.

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Gooch's chapter on the signs of pregnancy is as compact, clear, and practical as possible. The additions made to this subject, since it was written, are—1, Signs derived from auscultation; 2, Signs indicated by certain chemical changes in the fluids. The latter are not of much value, and the reader will find that value discussed in Dr. Montgomery's able work on the history of Pregnancy with the sobriety and fulness which seem characteristics of the Dublin school; the works emanating from which have most deservedly placed it second to none in Europe for largeness of view and practical instruction.

The stethoscope applied to the abdomen of a pregnant woman is said to detect the following sounds:—

1. A shock, with a rubbing sound, depending on the movements of the foetus.

2. A souffle, or blast, synchronous with the maternal pulse—its seat and cause disputed.

3. The double beat of the foetal heart.

4. The "funic souffle," discovered by Kennedy of Dublin.

5. A supposed murmur, which Stoltz of Strasburg says accompanies the decomposition of the liquor amnii.

6. A crackling sound (such as is imitated by drawing the nail over a rush-seated chair), caused by the separation of the placenta, discovered by M. Caillaut.

The sounds Nos. 2 and 3 are the most important. I may premise, however, that uterine auscultation requires much practice, and is full of uncertainties. The sounds are often not detectable, often intermit or become feeble, without any assignable reason. With regard to time, it may be asserted, as a general rule, that these sounds are not heard till between the twelfth and the twentieth week. When heard, they afford the strongest presumptions of pregnancy.

With respect to No. 2, or the uterine souffle, it certainly



exists in cases of tumour of the womb and pelvis, without any pregnancy. It has been found in cases of putrid foetus and diseased placenta; hence it affords no diagnostic mark as to the foetal or placental development. Bouillaud, I think, has established that it may be caused by the pressure of any tumour on the pelvic vessels; for he and others have displaced the souffle by shifting the position of the woman. Granting, however, that this souffle may arise from various causes, I am not disposed to exclude the uterine circulation as one of them; for I have now for several years detected abnormal sounds in the pregnant uterus, where it has been the seat of that pain Wigand describes as rheumatic. These sounds are opposite the painful spot, and begin and cease with the advent and departure of that pain.

The double beat *not synchronous* with the maternal pulse is the most precious sign as to the certainty of pregnancy, and the *life* and *position* of the foetus. But it is often not heard, and often requires more time to detect it than is accorded, for obvious reasons, by most mothers. The ear is best educated for this kind of examination, by accustoming it to ausculting the infant immediately after birth. When the intensity, the tone, and the place of these cardiac sounds in the foetus are well fixed in the memory, they are readily distinguished through the pregnant uterus in subsequent examples.

These sounds should always be compared with the beat of the maternal pulse, otherwise a false diagnosis may ensue. A girl in the humbler classes was violated and left by her lover, a sailor. The menstruation ceased, the belly enlarged. The uterus was not developed; yet the 'tic-tac' of the foetal heart was heard 140 times per minute close under the stethoscope.

The case was deemed one of extra-uterine fœtation, until Drs. Challice and Druitt, in consultation with myself, found that these supposed foetal sounds were synchronous with the maternal pulse—heard through a mass of ascitic fluid—which being evacuated by tapping, cleared up everything, except the poor girl's reputation.

The literature of auscultation applied to questions of pregnancy is very diffuse and cumbrous, requiring a critical hand to compress and sift its available truths. On the whole, the absence of the uterine souffle and cardiac sounds do not prove the absence of pregnancy, while the presence of either or of both affords the strongest presumption of its existence. By the cardiac sounds, the kind of presentation, the number of children, and the question as to whether they are alive or dead, are all fairly determinable.

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Gooch has preserved only one of the several 'articles' he wrote for the non-medical public—that on the plague, published in the 'Quarterly Review.' The reader will judge for himself how far the logic of the doctrine of contagion is brought out in the discussion, and he cannot fail to mark the breadth of argument and the polish and keenness of the style by which an important question was settled. But commerce and the commercial mind brook no hindrance; therefore all questions as to quarantine are virtually laid aside in this country, or only acquiesced in because the other States visit a relaxation of the quarantine laws on the part of England by a prohibition of the entrance of her vessels into their ports. Whenever other



nations shall have adopted the doctrines of free trade, the enforcement of exclusion of infected vessels and goods will be found impracticable. The increased communication, the rapidity of transit, the immense movement of man from place to place, must entail evil as well as good in a social point of view. Already diseases hitherto indigenous to a section of humanity are slowly but surely creeping up to commercial centres, from whence they will be rapidly propagated. One form of Asiatic leprosy is approaching the Levant from Arabia. The yellow fever has lately ravaged Lisbon under a temperature perfectly similar to that of London or Paris. The history of every disease which is communicated from man to man, establishes this melancholy truth, that ultimately such maladies overleap all obstacles of climate, and demonstrate a solidarity in evil as well as in good among the brotherhood of nations. Such has been the case with small-pox, measles, scarlatina, and the plague. In 1817, a little active charity towards a section of Hindoos perishing of famine might have crushed in the germ that fatal cholera which reeked from the putrid masses of the dead and the dying. That neglect had been visited by the death of fifty millions of people of all nations and kindreds, by the time this scourge appeared in 1832 in England. The investigation of the laws of propagation of this malady was intrusted by the College of Physicians to me, and the reader may perhaps not grudge the waste of an idle hour in turning to the 46th volume of the 'Quarterly Review' for 1832, for the discussion of the facts which establish the doctrine of contagion in general. The exaggerated fears of society at that time are fairly reflected in the article, which proves at least this,—that of all the terrors the imaginary are the most terrible.



This essay was the first to bring out these conclusions and comparisons which have since been treated in so masterly a way by Dr. Graves of Dublin, and subsequently by Dr. Baly in his elaborate volume of reports on the cholera.

I fear I have done little justice to the mental life of Gooch, styled as he is in a letter now before me by Southey the poet, as one of the most remarkable men of his time. Such was also the opinion formed of him by Walter Scott and by Lockhart. A short and interesting biography in a volume of the 'Family Library,' written by one of his dearest friends, Dr. Herbert Southey, will give the reader a view of Gooch's external accidents and fortunes—how he struggled, and how often success was marred by illness. Of his inner life, the play of fancy, the power of thought, the depth of feeling, the weight and force of illustration, the lucidity of expression: these qualities can only be judged by that circle of intimates which is now narrowing daily. They have all, without a single exception, passed through the ordeals of life in a way worthy of their own reputation and of his friendship. To them I offer this imperfect sketch. Their memories and affections will complete the picture, and their indulgence will, I trust, overlook my shortcomings.

ROBERT FERGUSON.

125, PARK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE;  
*March, 1859.*



[AUTHOR'S DEDICATION.]

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THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY ITS AUTHOR

TO

WILLIAM BABINGTON, M.D., F.R.S.,

AND FELLOW OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS;

FOR SIXTEEN YEARS HIS CONSTANT FRIEND,

AND ON TOO MANY OCCASIONS

HIS MUCH-VALUED PHYSICIAN;

A MAN WHO, TO THE CULTIVATION OF MODERN SCIENCES, ADDS

THE SIMPLICITY OF ANCIENT MANNERS;

WHOSE EMINENT REPUTATION AND RARE BENEVOLENCE OF HEART

HAVE LONG SHED A GRATEFUL LUSTRE OVER A PROFESSION

WHICH LOOKS UP TO HIM WITH

A MINGLED FEELING OF

RESPECT, CONFIDENCE, AND REGARD.





## P R E F A C E.

I WAS formerly Physician to the two Lying-in Hospitals of Westminster and London, and Lecturer on Midwifery at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and I have for many years been extensively employed in the practice of Obstetric Medicine; thus I have had the best opportunities of acquiring a practical knowledge of this branch of our profession, and the strongest motives for collecting and arranging it into a shape suitable for communication. I do not say this in a tone of exultation, for I have little reason; on the contrary, the thought of the opportunities I have enjoyed is always accompanied with the painful reflection, how imperfectly I have used them: this has depended partly on not knowing their full value when I first came into possession of them, but chiefly on a long course of ill health; and I write this preface principally to persuade those who come after me to turn their great opportunities to a good account. If I knew a young man placed in such a station, in whose eminence, founded on his professional utility, I felt interest, I would say to him, remember that your station is one which can be enjoyed only by a very few; do not consider it as one of lucrative conspicuousness, but as a trust which Providence has confided to you, and which you will neglect unless you do your utmost to improve your branch of medicine. He who has the care of a Lying-in Hospital, is a Lecturer on Midwifery, and is resorted to by the public as an obstetrical Physician, has opportunities of acquiring knowledge in, and extending the bounds of, obstetric medicine, which no other physician, surgeon, or general practitioner

can possess, whatever may be his talents. Your task will go on prosperously, the sooner you have ceased to read, and begun to observe and think: do not, however, attempt to dispense with reading, but dispatch it as speedily as is consistent with accuracy. Keep a note-book, read the most esteemed original writers on the most important subjects of your art, and while reading them note down briefly those points which you wish to remember, so as to have no occasion ever to look into the book again; provided you get the points of the work, the more briefly you do it the better; if you are skilful at this, you will find that a page will hold a pamphlet; and that twenty pages will often hold a bulky volume; if you read German, read Richter's *Bibliothek Chirurgische*, for he is the greatest master of the art of condensed analysis. Thus your manuscript volume will become a *Bibliotheca* of your branch of medicine, and you will never afterwards have occasion to consult the books themselves. There are some writers whom it would be wrong to abandon thus; master-minds, whom we return to again and again, not merely for the knowledge which they contain, but to observe how their minds worked—and the older we grow the fonder we become of them; such, in England, are Harvey on Physiology, and Sydenham on Medicine; but few such minds appear in any branch of knowledge; and with most of them, when you have squeezed out the juice, you may safely throw away the rind. Having thus made yourself acquainted with what was known by the most experienced writers on the most important subjects of your art, you are prepared to undertake the more difficult task of observing and reflecting for yourself: watch cases attentively, and take notes of their important particulars; not of every case, but only of the most important; and not lengthy notes, containing a diffuse description of unimportant trifles, which from the time they occupy will soon cease to be written, and if written, are sure never to be read; but a short description of the leading circumstances, with an equally short mention of the reflections which they suggest. Make yourself perfect in the art of examining dead bodies: accustom your hand to open them, and your eye to detect with accuracy morbid appearances. In putting down this important part of a case, come at once to the



essential morbid appearances ; have a head for parts examined which were found healthy : thus you will dispatch these in one line, unlike some who take up three-fourths of their report with the description of parts in which no morbid appearances were found. Five years industriously spent in the way in which I have advised, *provided you have a mind adapted to investigation*, will make you more competent to advise and act in the difficulties and diseases of your branch of the profession than most persons you come in contact with, and than many a man far older than yourself ; and after ten years so employed you will find yourself in possession of materials in a state fit to be produced, of various degrees of value ; some of them ‘ little articles of intellectual traffic with your neighbours, and some ‘ things worthy to be deposited among the general stores of human ‘ knowledge.’\* As you grow older, you will gradually fabricate with greater facility materials of greater value, and thus you will go on improving till you arrive at that age when the mind, satiated by action, longs for repose. But from this ‘ idea of the good Physitian ‘ and his reward,’ I must drop several fathoms down to speak of my own humble volume.

When I came to see diseases on a large scale, I was naturally led to compare what I saw of them in nature with the way in which they are represented in books ; to contrast the country which I was myself exploring with the best maps of it. In so doing it appeared to me that these maps were very defective in their representation even of the most important places ; some being laid down imperfectly, others inaccurately, some both the one and the other, and other important districts not laid down at all. Of many of the most important subjects there is no account whatever, excepting what is to be found in compendiums and systems, and here they are delineated so briefly, and often so obscurely and inaccurately, that it is utterly impossible for the young practitioner to acquire a clear and competent knowledge of them ; such a one as instruction might supply him with antecedent to experience. Take any one of the great questions in obstetrical medicine and surgery, and turn to the

\* Mr. Abernethy's first Lecture at the College of Surgeons.

account given of it in these sources of information ; and I defy the student, however attentively and thoughtfully he may read, to carry away with him any but partial and confused notions. At least, the most important subjects deserve to be represented on a larger scale, with copiousness, precision, and that selection of materials—that separation of the wheat from the chaff—which none but an experienced writer is equal to, and which no compiler can effect. Accounts of every difficulty in labour, and every disease of women, in the unimpregnated, the pregnant, and the puerperal states, and every disease of infancy and childhood ; accounts of all these subjects on such a scale, would be more than any man could write, and I might almost add, read ; but the great questions at any rate ought to be thus delineated. Dr. C. M. Clarke has supplied the deficiency in one class of the diseases of the unimpregnated state ; hence I have not touched on any of these, excepting only polypus of the uterus ; and I should not even on that, if I had not some additions to make of practical importance, especially the account of polypus of the neck or lip of the uterus, in which the usual diagnostic sign, the stalk being encircled by the orifice of the uterus, is no guide, and when trusted to, leads the practitioner into error, as I have repeatedly witnessed ; when this polypus grows with a very thick neck it sometimes puzzles the most experienced practitioners. But what Dr. C. M. Clarke has done for one class of diseases, requires to be done for others ; or what would be better, for the select or most important subjects throughout obstetric medicine. Such accounts I have attempted to give to the peritoneal fevers of lying-in women, of the disorders of the mind of lying-in women, of the mode of distinguishing pregnancy from the diseases which resemble it, of polypus of the uterus : the account of the irritable uterus I consider as a new map of a district which had not been laid down before, and like all new maps, an imperfect one. The other papers have a more partial object. When an author attempts to execute his own view of a subject, he is the last person in the world to judge whether he has succeeded or failed ; when he has finished his task it is impossible for him to see it from the same point of view, and in the same light, as the public will ; and as he

himself would if he could forget its thoughts and phrases, and read it with a fresh and impartial mind. He may show it to a judicious and well-informed friend ; but this is a poor thermometer of public opinion : the only one is publication, and to this I must trust the fate of my volume.

As my plan was in most cases to give a full account of each subject, and to include in it everything which I thought interesting or important about it, I have necessarily had to include many particulars already well known ; but even these I have not related from books, but from my own personal experience ; even in the most common-place parts I claim to be more than a compiler. The chapter on the art of distinguishing pregnancy from the diseases which resemble it, does not contain any point which was not already known, yet I know no books from which I could have compiled it, unless I had had ample experience in cases of doubtful pregnancy : the materials are drawn from my own observation, arranged and cemented by my own reflection ; this is a very different process to compilation. If the object of the student is to learn only what has been *said* on a subject, the pursuit of knowledge is an easy task ; but if his object is to learn what is *true* on a subject, the pursuit of knowledge is the task of a life.

If the profession should approve of this volume, and Providence should prolong my life, I may probably (as I possess materials) attempt similar accounts of other Diseases of Women and Children.





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## CHAPTER I.

### THE PERITONEAL FEVERS OF LYING-IN WOMEN.

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#### PART I.

THE most fatal disease to which lying-in women are subject is known under the names of Puerperal or Child-bed Fever, Puerperal Peritonitis. Its essential symptoms are pain and tenderness over the abdomen, with a rapid pulse.\* It begins a few days after delivery, with pain of the abdomen, shivering succeeded by heat, and a quick pulse. As the disease advances, the milk becomes suppressed, the belly tumid, and the breathing short; when it terminates fatally, it does so commonly about the fifth day, but often in less than half that time. On opening the abdomen, the morbid appearances are not uniform, but the most common and remarkable are a copious effusion of lymph and serum on the surface and in the cavity of the peritoneum. Thus it is a fever essentially complicated, with an affection of the peritoneum. A better name than Puerperal Fever, or Puerperal Peritonitis, would be that which I have placed at the head of this paper—'Peritoneal Fever'—for it would express the fact, that an affection of the peritoneum is an essential accompaniment of the disease, without defining what that affection is, because it is not uniform.

A remarkable circumstance about this disease is, that it is much more prevalent in some seasons than in others. In populous towns and cities it occasionally appears at any time, but the cases are few in number, mild in degree, and, if detected early, and treated properly, generally recover. Sometimes, however, it becomes ex-

\* 'Dr. Lowder adopted a very good method to form an accurate definition of this 'disease. He read all the different authors of character who had written on the 'subject, and noted down all those pathognomonic symptoms which they agreed 'were necessary to constitute the disease, and, on comparing these with his own 'experience, he found them to be very few—fever, intense pain of the head, and 'intense pain of the abdomen.'—(Lowder, MS. Lectures.)

traordinarily prevalent. In a lying-in hospital, in which there is commonly so little illness that the office of physician is almost a sinecure, cases of this disease sometimes become so numerous, that the physician finds it impossible to do his duty without visiting the hospital at least twice a day. In populous places so many cases occur, and so many of them are fatal, that the practitioner of midwifery goes about his tasks with unusual anxiety; and even in a thinly-peopled country, where the death of a lying-in woman is almost an unheard-of event, fatal cases have occurred in rapid succession, spreading terror among the pregnant women of the neighbourhood.

Another remarkable circumstance about this disease is, that, when it is most prevalent, it is most dangerous. Each case is much more difficult of cure than when it occurs seldomer. The practitioner finds that, although the group of symptoms resembles what he was formerly accustomed to, he has now to deal with a disease far more obstinate and destructive, and his usual remedies are not so successful as formerly; he loses case after case in spite of his best efforts. When it has been thus raging for a considerable time, it at length subsides; the cases become less frequent and less severe; the practitioner finds his treatment becoming more successful, partly because experience has taught him to detect it earlier and to treat it better, but probably also because the disease has itself become milder.

There is still another remarkable circumstance in the prevalent or epidemic form of this disease. It is not uncommon for the greater number of cases to occur in the practice of one man, whilst the other practitioners of the neighbourhood, who are not more skilful or more busy, meet with few or none. A practitioner opened the body of a woman who had died of puerperal fever, and continued to wear the same clothes. A lady whom he delivered a few days afterwards, was attacked with and died of a similar disease; two more of his lying-in patients, in rapid succession, met with the same fate; struck by the thought that he might have carried the contagion in his clothes, he instantly changed them, and met with no more cases of the kind. A woman in the country, who was employed as washerwoman and nurse, washed the linen of one who had died of puerperal fever; the next lying-in patient she nursed died of the same disease: a third nursed by her met with the same fate, till the neighbourhood, getting afraid of her, ceased to employ her. The disease has occurred in some wards of a hospital, the others being free from it;

but after ventilating, cleansing, and painting these wards, they became as healthy as the others. Facts such as these have long led to the suspicion that the disease might be communicated from one lying-in woman to another in the clothes of the practitioner or nurse, or the furniture of a tainted chamber.

From the little I have already said about the symptoms of this disease, and the morbid appearances discovered after death, it is clear that it essentially consists in fever, with an inflamed state of the peritoneum; but fever may vary, not only in degree, but in kind, or (as it is commonly called) type; and inflammation may vary, not only in degree, but also in kind or type. Hence, in investigating the nature of this disease, one of the first questions is, whether it is strictly uniform, differing only in degree in different cases, and requiring only different degrees of the same treatment; or whether it differs so much in kind or type, that the mode of treatment which is necessary in some cases, is destructive in others. The latter is the conclusion to which we must inevitably come, at first sight, in tracing the history of this disease in the works of those who have written about it. This I propose to do through the last half century, not for the useless purpose of raking up old and obsolete opinions, but because it is unsafe to draw inferences, except from a wider survey of facts than the experience of a single individual, or of a single epidemic, affords.

Puerperal fever was prevalent in Derbyshire, and the adjacent counties, between 1765 and 1775, and was described by Dr. Butter of Derby. His opinion was, that bleeding ought never to be used in this disease, unless when complicated with inflammation, and even in these cases bleedings of three ounces were sufficient; that the best remedy was ten grains of rhubarb and ten grains of cordial confection every day, till the stools became natural; and that this mode of treatment never failed. He gives several cases, all of which recovered.

In 1787, that is about ten years after Dr. Butter wrote, a puerperal fever was prevalent and fatal in London, and was described by the late Dr. John Clarke. It generally began on the second or third day after delivery, and terminated fatally in a week—sometimes as early as thirty-six hours. Its essential symptoms were pain and tenderness of the belly, with a rapid pulse. As the disease advanced, the milk became suppressed, the belly large, the breathing short, the pulse quick and weak. The appearances on dissection



were those of inflammation in some parts of the viscera of the abdomen; but this was never extensive, and sometimes there was none. The effusions of inflammation, however, were very abundant; they often amounted to several pints, and appeared to be pus and lymph mixed with serum. The surfaces of the viscera were coated with lymph, but the peritoneum underneath was not red. The interstices between the viscera were filled with masses of lymph, which formed a cast of their shape. Of the patients attacked with this disease, more than two thirds died: bleeding was injurious; leeches to the abdomen were useless; emetics were hurtful; bark and cordials, though indicated by debility, were inefficacious. *Dr. Clarke suspected that the disease might be occasioned by the purge which is always given to lying-in women on the second day after delivery; but glysters were not more successful.*

Now compare the accounts which Dr. Butter and Dr. Clarke have given of the results of their practice. The former seems to have lost none of his patients, and found a daily dose of rhubarb and cordial confection a never-failing remedy; the other lost more than two thirds of his patients, and nothing seems to have done any good. What can explain this contrariety of statement? A perusal of their pamphlets at once solves the mystery; they are talking about two different diseases. That described by Dr. Clarke was a genuine puerperal fever, accompanied by an affection of the peritoneum, which occasioned the effusion of lymph and serum; that described by Dr. Butter is quite different. Its ordinary duration was from ten days to five or six weeks. Whoever is familiar with the tremendous disease which I am considering, and knows that the patient is either dead or safe at the end of a week at longest, will instantly perceive that a disease so protracted cannot be the same; and a perusal of Dr. Butter's cases leaves no doubt on the subject. It was a slow remitting fever, not attended by any affection of the peritoneum. Its chief symptoms were sleepless nights, great depression of spirits, a quick pulse, one or two exacerbations of fever every day, and a very disorderly state of the alimentary canal. I have repeatedly seen it, but never as an epidemic; and though it lasts a long time, I believe it never kills. Dr. Butter imagined that this fever, which he never failed to cure, was the same disease which he describes as so fatal in London.

But the contrary statements of physicians do not always admit of so easy a solution. Dr. William Hunter, and Richter, the professor

of medicine and surgery in Gottingen, were two of the most useful minds that ever appeared in our profession. They were men of great talents and knowledge, singularly adapted for natural investigations, and remarkable for clearness of intellect and correctness of judgment. If any men could, such men might be trusted for giving accurate reports of a disease. Yet compare the accounts which these distinguished men have left of their experience in puerperal fever. Dr. William Hunter used to say in his lectures—‘Of those attacked by this disease, treat them in what manner you will, at least three out of four will die. Upon examining the bodies, the uterus, the viscera, and every other part of the abdomen, are found to be inflamed. There is a quantity of purulent matter in the cavity of the abdomen, and the intestines are all glued together. We tried various methods, (bleeding, refrigerants, stimulants, mithridate,) but everything failed.’ Richter, speaking of the child-bed fever, says, ‘I have often seen the child-bed fever, and always treated it successfully. I have also seen cases, both near and at a distance, in which the fever was treated differently from what I am accustomed to treat it, and the patients died. I therefore think that I have a right to offer my opinion about the nature and treatment of this fever.’

One would at first suppose that Richter had committed some error like that of Dr. Butter; but the following remarks must remove this suspicion. ‘It is plain,’ says he, ‘that it is not every fever which attacks a lying-in woman which is to be called child-bed fever. Its principal symptoms are debility; swelling of the abdomen, colic-like pains; pains in the abdomen, on external pressure; pain of the head, especially in the forehead. The disease is commonly fatal in a few days. On dissection, the viscera of the abdomen are found inflamed, suppurating, gangrenous. The means for preventing the disease, or, if it has already begun, for curing it, are timely evacuations by purgatives.’\*

There can be no doubt that Hunter and Richter both meant, thus far at least, the same disease—that it was the child-bed fever which is attended by inflammation of peritoneum, and which, if not cured, kills in a few days. But what shall we say to their very opposite experience? the one, whatever he did, lost three patients out of four; the other, by the gentlest aperients, never failed to cure

\* *Medicinische und Chirurgische Bemerkungen, von D. A. G. Richter, b. ii. s. 60.*

the disease. Richter, at the time he wrote this statement, must have been sixty years of age. The inexperience of youth, therefore, will not explain it, and it is explicable only on the supposition either that, old as he was, he had never seen the epidemic puerperal fever, or that, if he had, the epidemics which he had seen were singularly mild.

The reader will feel curious to know the mode of treatment which in Richter's hands was so successful. On the first symptoms of child-bed fever, he gave a purge two days successively, each enough to operate three times. On the following days smaller doses were given, enough to operate once, or at most twice, and this plan was continued till all symptoms had ceased.

Dr. Lowder, who, about thirty years ago, lectured on midwifery at the medical school of Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals, and who was esteemed by the best judges of those times as an excellent practical physician, gave the following account of this disease: That the pathognomonic symptoms were pain of the abdomen, pain of the head and fever; that it terminated fatally in a space of time between forty-eight hours and one week; that the appearances on dissection were redness of the peritoneum, adhesion of the intestines, effusion of serum, mingled with pus and lymph. He thought that the inflammation was erysipelatous and the fever typhoid. When the inflammatory symptoms were distinct, he permitted a few ounces of blood to be drawn; but if the symptoms were typhoid, bleeding was positively injurious—he mentioned it as the assertion of many medical men, that all the patients who were bled died. Whenever the fever was typhoid, he recommended bark, and mentioned two cases, apparently hopeless, which recovered by taking daily a gallon of the decoction.

Among the London physicians, Dr. Denman was the chief believer in the inflammatory nature of puerperal fever, and in the safety and absolute necessity of bleeding, provided it was used early and actively. There can be no doubt he meant that puerperal fever, of which peritoneal inflammation is an essential part; and if I understand him rightly, he believed, that whenever the peritoneum was affected in that way which terminates in the effusion of serum and lymph, it was always with that form of inflammation which bears and requires bleeding. His mode of treating the disease seems to have been this: First, at the commencement of the disease, by a full bleeding from the arm, and if the effect of it was beneficial, by



another bleeding after a few hours; if the constitution of the patient was feeble, he preferred cupping, or leeches to the abdomen. Next, by an emetic of ipecacuanha or tartarized antimony, so as to procure full vomiting, and after this had subsided, if the disease was not extinguished, the emetic was to be repeated. These emetics, generally, produced not only vomiting, but sweating and purging; if not, sulphate of magnesia dissolved in thin gruel was given every few hours, till it procured several stools. Having succeeded in procuring these evacuations, he gave a full opiate. The rest of the treatment consisted in a saline aperient every morning and an opiate every night.

Puerperal fever was epidemic in Aberdeen more than two years, between 1789 and 1792, and was ascribed by Dr. Gordon, a physician of that place. He states, that the essential remedy was blood-letting employed early and freely; that when he took ten or twelve ounces away, the patient generally died, but *when he took twenty-four ounces away at once, and during the first six hours of the disease, the patient commonly recovered.* 'If practitioners,' said he, 'allow themselves to be guided by the pulse, they will run into a fatal error, because the pulse is more frequently weak and feeble, than strong and full, even at the beginning of the disease, yet I bled notwithstanding with great success. The pulse, instead of being thereby weakened, became more full and strong than before. This disease seized such women only as were visited or delivered by a practitioner, or taken care of by a nurse, who had previously attended patients affected with the disease.' His treatment consisted in a very early and very large bleeding, a bolus of three grains of calomel and two scruples of jalap, followed by a daily purgative and a nightly opiate. Of the patients whom he attended, twenty-eight died out of seventy-seven; and although his practice, when it had fair play, was much more successful, he yet confesses the loss of some.\*

\* Sprengel, in his History of Medicine, gives the following account of this work. 'The history which Alexander Gordon has given of an epidemic puerperal fever, which he considered as inflammatory, and which nevertheless he treated with drastic purgatives, such as jalap and sweet mercury, *without resorting to bleeding.*'—*Histoire de la Médecine*, par Kurt Sprengel, tom. vi. p. 343. If this is a specimen of the accuracy of this history, it will diminish the confidence with which we should consult this very learned and otherwise useful publication. The more, however, I look into compilations, and trace them to their sources, the more I suspect compilers find that, if they were very scrupulous about accuracy, they would never get on in

From the foregoing account of the experience and opinions of different physicians, who had opportunities of observing puerperal fever, what inferences are we to draw? Supposing that each observed accurately the disease which he witnessed, and that no mistake was made in the formation of his opinion, the inevitable conclusion is this:—that puerperal fever, by which I always mean that fever which is accompanied by an inflammatory state of the peritoneum, is not one uniform disease, but may occur under different forms,—that sometimes it is so mild as to be curable by the gentlest aperients, and at other times it is very obstinate and fatal. That in this latter form it sometimes consists of acute inflammation of the peritoneum with inflammatory fever, which bears, and is curable only by, early and active depletion, sometimes of inflammation and fever of a low type, in which depletion is useless, and even pernicious.

Whilst these different opinions were formed and promulgated in England, some zealous and able physicians on the continent thought they had discovered a successful mode of treating this hitherto intractable disease.

In 1782, the Royal Medical Society of Paris, being ordered by the French government, made a report on the mode of treating puerperal fever, which had been employed with unfailing success by M. Doulcet, one of the physicians to the Hôtel Dieu. There can be no doubt that this disease was the genuine puerperal fever; it began about three days after delivery, was attended by pain and distension of the abdomen, and a quick, small, contracted pulse; the milk was suppressed. After two days the pain diminished, or disappeared altogether; there came on a cold viscid sweat, a weak tremulous pulse, delirium, and death took place on the third or fourth day. The abdomen contained two or three pints of fluid like unclarified whey, with flakes like curd over the surface of the intestines. After losing a vast number of patients, M. Doulcet happening to be in the hospital at the moment when a woman was seized with the disease attended by sickness, he ordered fifteen grains of ipecacuanha to be divided into two doses, one to be given directly, and the other an hour and a half afterwards. It produced vomiting and purging, and the latter was kept up by a potion made with two ounces of oil of almonds, one ounce of syrup of marsh mallows, and

their work. It is but fair to state, that I have used the French copy translated by A. J. L. Jourdan, who is very alert at exposing the '*erreurs grossières*' of his rival translator, M. Geiger. I hope that this is an '*erreur grossière*' of Sprengel.



two grains of Kermes' mineral. In what doses and with what frequency this was given, is not stated; was it a potion for one day, or one dose? The same remedies were used the next, and every day until the symptoms of the disease had subsided; the woman recovered, and the same treatment was employed in every subsequent case. From losing every patient, he now lost none. During four months nearly two hundred were cured; five or six refused to take the medicine, and all these died. *The success of the remedy depended on its being given at the moment of attack*; the loss of a few hours, however, was not always irreparable. When this account arrived in England, it produced, as may easily be supposed, a strong sensation, and the practice was tried by various physicians with different results. Dr. Walsh said it was infallible; Dr. Denman that it was eminently useful; Dr. Lowder that it disappointed him; Dr. John Clarke that it was injurious; and it soon fell into disuse. Was it ever fairly tried in this country? that is, not after the disease had established itself for several hours, but at the moment of attack, and with the potion of almond oil and Kermes' mineral.\*

Dr. Böer of Vienna was for a long time physician to the large lying-in institution and director of the midwifery school in that city, and was much distinguished for his practical acuteness. Many years ago he thought he had discovered an almost infallible remedy for puerperal fever. Of this discovery he gives the following account. I might abridge it, but the reader will prefer his own interesting narrative.

'I once lost in one day two lying-in women from puerperal fever; the one I attended alone, the other in consultation with the ordinary house physician.—At the same time I had also in the practical school (of midwifery) two lying-in women ill with the same disease. The next day one of them died, and in the other death was approaching. It was the seventh or eighth day

\* Kermes' mineral, or the poudre des Chartreux, was made by boiling four pounds of antimony, one pound of the solution of fixed nitre per deliquium, and three pounds of rain water, for two hours, and then filtering the boiling liquor through paper. This, on standing, deposited a yellow powder; the liquor was poured off, and the powder washed and dried. 'This precipitated sulphur,' says Quincy, 'is really, as I am convinced from facts which have fallen within my own observation, the most certain and powerful antimonial medicine that can be given with safety. It has been recommended in fevers, but the use of medicines of this class is not yet enough authorised by experience to render such a practice eligible. The doses given have been from one grain to four, but it is best to begin first with the smallest dose, especially with young persons, as the force of its operation varies greatly in different constitutions.'



‘ of her disease ; the belly was very prominent, tense, and so painful, ‘ that she could hardly bear the bed-clothes ; everything passed ‘ away from her unconsciously. She had an excessively quick ‘ pulse, starting of the tendons, and wandered in her talk ; her ‘ breathing was difficult and broken, and her countenance fallen : ‘ the milk of the breasts had gradually disappeared, and almost ‘ from the beginning of the disease no lochia were to be seen. With ‘ the death of these three lying-in women, to which I already in ‘ anticipation added the fourth, I was so depressed in spirits, that ‘ in the evening I sought for consolation in the society of two inti- ‘ mate friends ; but I could not divest myself of the fatality of these ‘ diseases. Among other thoughts it occurred to me to try a ‘ hitherto unemployed preparation of antimony, which I was assured ‘ in many kinds of fever had manifested an uncommon efficacy. In ‘ this case, thought I, there is nothing to be lost in the attempt. I ‘ went home, provided myself with a dose of it, and reached, about ‘ ten o’clock in the evening, the chamber of the dying woman. I ‘ found her worse than she was six or seven hours before ; but as one ‘ of the students and two of the female practitioners were waiting at ‘ the bed-side, I was obliged to take care not to be seen giving ‘ a dying woman a remedy out of my packet. I gave it, therefore, ‘ unseen to the midwife, who gave it to the patient, instead of one of ‘ the common camphor powders, mixed with tea. I then wished the ‘ poor creature an eternal good night.

‘ When I went the next morning, my first question was, when did ‘ the patient die ? “ Die ? ” answered the midwife. “ Early in the ‘ morning she begged half a cup of coffee. She sat up in bed, and ‘ would not rest till the nurse combed out her hair. I thought her ‘ delirious.” She seized me by the hand, and thanked me. I knew ‘ not at that moment whether what I saw was an improvement, ‘ or only a delusive lighting up from the insensibility of a fatal gan- ‘ grene ; but it was a real amendment. She had in the night a pro- ‘ fuse sweat, and passed much urine, after which she said she felt as ‘ if she had imbibed a new life. The pain and distension of the ‘ belly were gone ; the pulse beat more freely and slower ; the ‘ breathing was calm, the tongue naturally moist, the diarrhœa had ‘ almost ceased, and the lochia began again to appear. In short, all ‘ the symptoms seemed gone by magic. She longed for a little wine ‘ and water, which was given her. After four days, during which

‘ she passed a great quantity of uncommonly thick and turbid urine, with a mucous sediment, she became free from fever, and after eight or nine days she left the hospital.

‘ Although this unexpected recovery rejoiced me much, I was far from ascribing it to the medicine. I rather looked on the whole happy revolution as the effect of a natural crisis. It was not long before another lying-in woman, notwithstanding all the means used, was in the same extreme circumstances. I gave her the same medicine with the same consequences, only the improvement was not so sudden. The patient had a profuse sweat, and passed urine which looked more like a dissolved bilious stool than urine. In five or six days she was perfectly restored. \* \* \* \* \*

‘ After twelve or fourteen such desperate cases, in which it always effected a cure in one and the same way, and after I had tried the common antimonial preparations without any good effect, and often with distinct injury, I began against my will to place especial confidence in it. After I was convinced of the efficacy of this medicine in cases where the disease had reached the highest degree, I proceeded to order it at the beginning of the disease. From that time, in our practice, the puerperal fever was never fatal; it never even reached a dangerous stage, for the medicine as certainly obviated the disease as it cured it when it was already fully formed.’

For the truth of the foregoing statement, Dr. Böer appeals to those who accompanied him at the bed-sides of those patients. ‘ When,’ he remarks, ‘ on the one hand I consider the preparation and the component parts of this antimonial remedy, and on the other the symptoms and nature of the disease in which it effected a cure, I can no longer reconcile myself with the common idea of the healing power of medicines. I am firmly of opinion, that either the succession of symptoms from which we conclude the presence of a disease are not sufficiently determined, and the true nature of most diseases is still hidden, or that certain substances must produce in our bodies an entirely different effect to what we commonly believe.’\*

The sequel of this narrative is very disappointing. Dr. Böer never explained what his antimonial preparation was. I have been told he would give it to any medical man with directions how to use

\* Dr. L. J. Böer's *Abhandlungen und Versuche. Beobachtungen über das Kindbettfieber*, b. i. s. 116.

it; but that the mode of its preparation was a secret which he never divulged. The above account was published in the year 1790; in 1806, he published a systematic account of the different forms of the puerperal fever which he had seen, in which he states that his subsequent experience had only corroborated his former estimate of the efficacy of the puerperal powder; but the only passage which throws any light on the preparation of this medicine is one in which he praises 'the mild calx of antimony, or other preparation of this 'medicine, more powerfully sudorific.\* Böer thought highly of M. Doucet's mode of treatment, and it is not at all improbable that Kermes' mineral, which formed a part of that plan, was the antimonial preparation which constituted his puerperal powder.

I have hitherto been describing the experience and opinions of practitioners of the last age, all of whom, I believe, are now dead. I come now to my own time—to the experience and opinions of my contemporaries, who are still alive, about a disease which I, as well as themselves, have had ample opportunities of seeing both in private families and in lying-in hospitals. In entering on this part of my subject I shall of course cease to be the mere chronicler, and become almost unconsciously the critic of opinions. It is now many years ago since the opinions were published which I am about to examine. If an author was to examine his own writings, composed fifteen years ago, on a subject on which his mind, instead of being stationary, had been every year acquiring new knowledge which had suggested new thoughts, he would of course find many things to alter, and it is probable that what I shall have to say in the shape of criticism on these works, is nothing more than what would occur to the authors themselves, if they were employed in examining them anew.

About the year 1813, puerperal fever was very prevalent for two years in the counties of Durham and Northumberland, and for one year in Sunderland and the neighbouring district; and an account of it was published by Dr. Armstrong, who was at that time practising at Sunderland. Out of forty-three cases in that town, forty occurred in the practice of one surgeon and his assistant, and he mentions several other instances of the disease occurring only among the patients of particular practitioners. In the cases which he saw, the pulse was seldom less than 120 in a minute, and mostly rather

\* Böer's Traktat vom Puerperalfieber, s. 91.



full, tense, and vibrating, or very small, sharp, or wiry. He describes the disease, however, as occurring under two forms,—‘one accompanied with the symptoms of simple peritonitis, the other, ‘marked by a less evidently declared inflammation of the abdomen, ‘was connected with a more overpowering and oppressive fever.’ In this latter form he thinks that what seemed actual debility was only a greater degree of oppression from more intense inflammation. ‘A great many women died of this disease, and I was credibly ‘informed,’ says he, ‘every patient perished who was not bled in the ‘beginning.’ When we compare this remark with the opposite remark in Dr. Lowder’s time, that every woman who was blooded died, what shall we think of human experience? In some cases he describes the symptoms of inflammation within the abdomen as being scarcely or not at all complained of by the patient; there was ‘oppressive languor, diminished sensibility of the nervous system, ‘great frequency of the pulse, quickened respiration, flatulence of ‘the stomach;’ the patients made little or no complaint of pain in the abdomen, but when pressure was applied to it they shrunk. In some cases even this symptom was absent; pressure on the belly induced no change on the countenance, yet dissection discovered traces of inflammation both in the brain and abdomen.

Dr. Armstrong divides the disease into two stages; the first that of excitement, the last that of collapse. In the first, bleeding and purging are the essential remedies; but when the stage of excitement is over, and that of collapse has begun, these same remedies are useless and pernicious. Physicians, by not being consulted till the stage of collapse, have concluded that the disease would never bear depletion; that it was one of debility, and required bark and cordials. Hence it is of vital importance to distinguish the stage of excitement from that of collapse, that these remedies may be employed only in the former. The stage of excitement lasts from about twenty to seventy hours; the pulse is about 120, and vibrating; in some cases, however, it is much quicker, soft, and compressible: there is great apparent debility, but it is only apparent, and so far from being an objection to depletion, is a more urgent reason for it. It is important to distinguish this state of depression from collapse. In the stage of collapse the pulse becomes very small, weak, and quick, (from 140 to 160), the breathing quick, the heat of the body diminished, the abdomen large. Dr. Armstrong thinks that the elder physicians used bloodletting unsuccessfully, not only because they employed it too late, but too sparingly. He

thinks that its success depends on being used very early and very actively. His own practice was to bleed from the arm to syncope, then to give a scruple of calomel in mucilage, and two ounces of a solution of sulphate of magnesia in infusion of senna, every hour till they operated. The rest of the treatment consisted in low diet, purgatives, and after the inflammatory symptoms had been subdued small opiates by the stomach or rectum. Sometimes one full bleeding was sufficient, sometimes it required to be repeated after a few hours; in all cases the blood was buff-coloured; sometimes a scruple of calomel was insufficient to produce speedy and free purging, and the dose was increased to half a drachm. In a very few cases the gums became sore, and these recovered with unusual celerity. Out of forty-three cases, five only died. Dr. Armstrong found that the combined action of bleeding and purging was necessary to subdue the disease; '*copious bleeding immediately succeeded by copious purging on the onset.*'

About a year after the publication of Dr. Armstrong's account of the epidemic at Sunderland, Mr. Hey, of Leeds, son of the celebrated surgeon of that name, published an account of puerperal fever which had prevailed in that town and neighbourhood several years before that at Sunderland. It began in 1809. I need not describe the symptoms which I have so often repeated, and shall only notice a few of the most important: the pulse at the beginning was sometimes strong and full, but more frequently it was weak, or speedily became so; there soon appeared great debility and sinking; when blood was drawn from the arm, the crassamentum was covered with a 'thick coat of size, and was very firm.' The elder Mr. Hey had long been in the habit of treating those cases of puerperal fever which occasionally occurred by first an active purgative, and occasionally a bleeding, and during the remainder of the disease a saline purgative every morning, enough to operate four or five times, and an opiate every night; but this treatment was totally inadequate to the intractable form of the disease which they had now to combat; for some time every case that they met with terminated fatally. Out of fourteen cases, only three recovered. This plan being so unsuccessful, physicians were consulted about the subsequent cases, and apparently at their suggestion bark was tried in decoction or powder, and in very frequent doses; but this plan was as little or even less successful. Remarking that in proportion as he receded from the antiphlogistic treatment his success diminished, and that the remedies which did most good were purges, he was inclined to



return to the former with more activity; and this inclination was strengthened by reading the pamphlet of Dr. Gordon of Aberdeen, which plan he adopted chiefly with this difference, that he often carried bleeding much further than Dr. Gordon, and omitted the nightly opiates which Dr. Gordon had used. His plan, therefore, now consisted in early and active bleeding and purging. The first full bleeding was often followed a few hours afterwards by a second, and sometimes even a third. A bolus of three grains of calomel, and twenty-five grains of jalap, was given immediately; and this was followed by a solution of salts in an infusion of senna, repeated till they operated freely; the purging was kept up till the symptoms were quite subdued: the result of this compared with the result of his former practice was striking—he had formerly saved only three out of fourteen; he now lost only three out of thirty-three.

As the advocates for bleeding contend that it is quite useless, unless employed early and actively, the reader will naturally ask how early and how actively? As an answer to this question, I have thought it useful to make a table of Mr. Hey's successful cases, showing how many hours the disease has lasted before bleeding was employed, how many ounces of blood were taken away, and whether the recovery was speedy or protracted. The reader will observe, and it is an instructive fact, that in most of the cases remedies were used within a very few hours of the attack, (sometimes only four, or even two had elapsed,) and the recovery was speedy; but in that in which nearly two days had elapsed before the remedies were employed, the recovery was very protracted.

Number of Hours from the Attack.	Pulse.	Ounces of Blood taken.	Mode of Recovery.
4 . . . . .	140	20	Speedy.
12 . . . . .	138	30	Speedy.
2 . . . . .	130	30	Speedy.
24, but coming on slowly } all that time . . . . }	...	14	Speedy.
About 4 . . . . .	120	36	Speedy.
4 . . . . .	...	37	Speedy.
4 . . . . .	134	70	Long weak.
13 . . . . .	112	48	Speedy.
Day or two . . . . .	...	36	Protracted.
8 . . . . .	...	39	Speedy.
6 . . . . .	...	52	Speedy.
Coming on slowly several } hours . . . . . }	...	53	Speedy.
17 . . . . .	...	24	Speedy.



The treatises of Dr. Armstrong and Mr. Hey produced a strong impression on the minds of medical men in this country. It convinced them that the puerperal fever which was then, and had been for several years, infesting various parts of the island was an acute inflammation of the peritoneum, and that bleeding and purging, employed very early and very actively, was the only mode of treatment which was capable of arresting it; but the impression did not stop here; it produced a general conviction, that the present was a fair representative of all former and all future puerperal fevers; that bleeding and purging were its essential remedies in all places and seasons; that they had failed only because they had been used too late and too sparingly, and would succeed if they were used early and actively. In short, that a light had been thrown on the nature of puerperal fever, which explained the failures of physicians in times past, and would ensure them success in times to come. Of these conclusions, as far as they relate to the disease which the writers had been witnessing and treating I have no doubt; but as far as they relate to past and future epidemics, it may be useful to examine the reasoning which led to these conclusions, and how far they have been corroborated by subsequent experience.

I have no doubt, from the symptoms and progress of the disease which Mr. Hey witnessed at Leeds, and Dr. Armstrong at Sunderland, that it was a genuine puerperal fever; that is, fever accompanied by an affection of the peritoneum, although the proof by dissection was wanting in both.\* I applaud the zeal and ability with which they investigated its nature, and conducted its treatment; but a question of great difficulty and importance still remains, namely, whether the puerperal fever, accompanied by an affection of the peritoneum, and often epidemic, does not assume different types in different seasons, being sometimes acutely inflammatory, and bearing and requiring early and active depletions; at others, characterized by debility, or what has been called action without power, in which depletion, however early and actively employed, is useless and pernicious.

There are only two sources which can afford materials for solving this question. 1st, A comparison of the records of past epidemics

\* 'It is to be regretted that no examination could be obtained, as morbid dissection might perhaps have thrown some additional light on the nature of the disease.'—*Armstrong on Puerperal Fever*, p. 10. Mr. Hey also makes a similar complaint.

with our experience of the present, in order to see whether they are sufficiently similar to warrant the conclusion that they are curable by similar modes of treatment. 2dly, To apply the mode of treatment which has been so successful in the epidemic which we have witnessed to the treatment of future epidemic puerperal fevers. Of these two sources of information, is it not obvious that the former affords only probable or conjectural evidence, and that the latter only affords conclusive proof? At the time when Dr. Armstrong and Mr. Hey published their Treatises, and when they and the medical profession entertained such sanguine hopes, they were in possession only of the former source of information; and they appear to me to have laid far too much stress upon it, and permitted it to lead them to far too positive conclusions. The two circumstances which seem to have contributed chiefly to this opinion were, the similarity between the symptoms of past epidemics and the symptoms of that which they themselves had witnessed, and the vestiges of inflammation discovered on dissection. Dr. Armstrong remarks, that 'there is perhaps no disease more uniform than puerperal fever in the symptoms and morbid derangements which it induces,' and he quotes Dr. Hulme in favour of the 'immutability of the puerperal fever.'

In the leading circumstances of the disease there is certainly great uniformity; it almost always commences a few days after delivery, is marked by pain and tenderness of the belly, and a rapid pulse; if not cured, terminates fatally within a week, and, after death, commonly leaves the depositions and effusions of inflammation. Thus far it is very uniform, but no further. To say nothing of its causes, there are at least three things requisite to form the history of a disease: 1st. Its symptoms. 2d. The effects produced by remedies. 3d. The morbid appearances discovered after death. In the history of puerperal fever there is, even in the first and third of these particulars, considerable difference: this is apparent even in the experience of Dr. Armstrong himself, who describes the local inflammatory symptoms as being sometimes very distinct, sometimes very indistinct, and sometimes absent altogether, the patients not only complaining of no pain in the abdomen, but bearing pressure without the slightest shrinking. Compare, too, the symptoms of the disease as described by Dr. Gordon, of Aberdeen, and those described by Dr. Clarke, of London. In the appearances discovered after death, there is also this great difference in different epidemics, that some-

times there are the effusions of inflammation, with extensive redness of the peritoneum, at other times the peritoneum is quite pale ; in the sequel it will appear that there is a still greater difference in the appearances after death. But if from the symptoms and morbid appearances we pass to the second particular in the history of the disease, namely, the effects of remedies (which form not only an essential, but the most important part of this history, for the two others are of no value but as they throw light on this) there is perhaps no disease of which the histories have been so opposite. Richter could almost always cure it. Dr. William Hunter and Dr. Clarke could scarcely ever cure it. In Dr. Lowder's time it was observed that every woman who was blooded died. In Dr. Armstrong's time it was observed that every woman who was not blooded died.

Throughout the whole chapter on the pathology of the disease, Dr. Armstrong writes as if he thought that the symptoms during life, and the appearances discovered after death, were infallible guides to the nature and the treatment of the disease. Thus he remarks, that if a practitioner were to see a woman soon after delivery suffering pain in the abdomen, a quick pulse, and the other signs of fever, and after death were to find no other morbid appearance than extensive traces of inflammation in the abdomen, he would at once conclude that the disease was active inflammation, and would in future treat it as such ; and, alluding to those writers who have considered the low epidemic fever of child-bed as a different disease from peritoneal inflammation, he says, 'it becomes a matter of great practical consequence whether symptoms and dissections justify such a distinction.' It appears to me that symptoms and dissections cannot settle the question, and that Dr. Armstrong lays more stress on the argument than it will bear. Supposing many cases of a disease, which bore in general a striking resemblance to one another in the symptoms and the appearances on dissection ; this would naturally suggest as a strong probability that they would all be affected in the same way by the same remedies : but suppose that on applying these remedies to all these cases, with the same activity, at the same stage of the disease, and, as far as can be made out, under the same circumstances, they produced different effects on different cases, some being relieved and recovering, others being made worse and dying ; this would be more conclusive evidence of a difference between these cases, than the symptoms and morbid



appearances were of their identity. The effects of remedies on a disease, if accurately observed, form the most important part of its history; they are like chemical tests, frequently detecting important differences in objects which previously appeared exactly similar. How many diseases are there in which the symptoms are inadequate guides: in cases apparently syphilitic and apparently similar, some as soon as mercury affects the mouth begin to mend, and rapidly recover; in others, the ulcers begin to spread; and so imperfect are the appearances as guides, that I have known the first surgeons in the profession giving opposite opinions about the same case, and a nose lost from taking the opinion of the majority. The local pains and constitutional disturbance which occur in feeble and bloodless persons, and which are aggravated by bleeding and other evacuants, strikingly resemble the local pains and constitutional disturbance which occur in vigorous and plethoric persons, and which the lancet and other evacuants relieve and ultimately cure; yet how many years is it before the young practitioner learns that there are cases apparently so similar yet really so different, and how to distinguish them—and how many practitioners are there who never learn it at all! Symptoms and dissections can never do more than suggest probabilities about the nature of a disease and the effect of a remedy on it. A trial of the remedies themselves is the only conclusive proof. Sydenham was so aware of this, that he says, ‘Epidemic diseases may seem alike to the unwary, because in some sort they do agree to outward appearance;’ adding this confession, ‘when a new species of fever arose, I was doubtful how to proceed, and notwithstanding the utmost caution, could scarce ever preserve one or two of the first patients from danger,’ so far from infallible were symptoms as guides.

These are the remarks which have occurred to me in examining *the reasoning* which led to the belief that puerperal fever is always an acute peritonitis: the next question is, how far this belief has been corroborated by subsequent experience? I proceed to relate my own.

## THE PERITONEAL FEVERS OF LYING-IN WOMEN.

## PART II.

I was appointed physician to the Westminster Lying-in Hospital in the year 1812, and as the elder physician, Dr. Thynne, was aged and infirm, the whole task devolved upon me for several years, to attend both the in- and the out-patients in their difficult labours, and their illnesses. In the latter, I could resort to the experience and skill of Dr. Maton, who then held, and still holds, the office of consulting physician to the hospital. My situation gave me ample opportunities of observing the diseases of lying-in women among the poor of London and its neighbourhood.

I had not been physician to the hospital long before I remarked how much more healthy it was at one time than at another; sometimes, for many months, there was no sickness among the patients; as soon as the labour was over they were well; they required nothing but an opiate for their after-pains, and a few doses of aperient medicine, and the medical part of my office was almost a sinecure. At other times, cases of illness were perpetually occurring; as soon as one was over another began; often I had several at the same time under my care; this would go on for several months, and then cease, leaving the hospital healthy for a long time.

The cases which were so numerous in these unhealthy seasons had the common symptoms and course of puerperal fever. They began a few days after delivery; the leading symptoms were diffused pain and tenderness, with some swelling of the abdomen, a quick pulse which was generally at first full and vibrating. Sometimes it was small, but still it was hard and incompressible; the skin was hot, though not so hot as in other fevers; the tongue was white and moist, the milk was suppressed. As the disease advanced, the belly became less painful, but more swelled, and the breathing short; towards the end, the pulse was very frequent and tremulous, and the skin covered with a clammy sweat; even in this state the tongue continued moist and the mind clear, and death took place

generally about the fifth day. On opening the abdomen, which was often as large as before delivery, the intestines were found distended with air, the peritoneum was red in various parts, its surface was covered with a coat of lymph, the intestines adhered to one another, and the omentum to the intestines; coagulable lymph was deposited on various surfaces, especially in the depressions between the convolutions of the bowels and on the omentum, on both which parts it often lay in large masses; the cavity of the peritoneum contained several pints of a turbid fluid, apparently serum mixed with lymph. In the uterus the morbid appearances were generally confined to its peritoneal covering, which was coated with lymph, on removing which the membrane itself was found unnaturally red; but in some cases the disease had penetrated deeper into the uterus, the substance of which was sometimes infiltrated with pus, and sometimes contained small abscesses about the size of a nut; the inner surface of the uterus, especially at the fundus, often appeared black and ragged, as if gangrenous. The enlargement of the abdomen depended entirely on air in the intestines; when there was no air there was no enlargement, even though the peritoneum contained several pints of fluid. The first time I noticed this was in the body of a young woman who had died with all the symptoms of puerperal fever, excepting the tumid belly. When the body was lifted from the bed on to the board on which it was to be opened, the belly, instead of being tumid, was sunk and hollow, and we began to think that her case had been mistaken; but on opening the abdomen we found several pints of turbid fluid.

The disease generally began very suddenly. After being quite well, feeling no sense of illness, or at least making no complaint, the patient was seized at once with chilliness, or shivering, and pain in the belly, and the pulse rose to 120 or 130; but sometimes the attack was more gradual. For many hours, or even for a day or two, there were pain and tenderness in one part of the abdomen, then in another, with long intervals, in which there was no pain anywhere; and during all this time the pulse would remain quiet, or not quicker than 80 or 90. In short, the disease would have an incipient stage; but this was not a common occurrence.

I soon found that I had to deal with a very fatal disease. When I saw the patients after it had been going on two or three days, or even longer (which was no unusual circumstance among the *out-patients*), I seldom or never saved them; the sunk countenance,



the small weak pulse of 140 or 160, the tympanitic belly, the short breathing, and sometimes the clammy sweat, all indicated a fatal disease, past the reach of depletion, even if it had ever been fit for it; and cordials appeared to promise the only chance of recovery, but they were seldom or never successful: wine mixed with gruel or egg for diet, and diffusable stimulants for medicines, were almost signals of a fatal termination. I was soon satisfied that the disease was incurable in this stage. Within the hospital I used to see it earlier, sometimes within a few hours of its commencement, although even here this was not always the case; for we had not yet learnt how soon the curable stage passed over, and how vitally important it was to begin the treatment at the very beginning of the disease. Besides this, the patients of a lying-in hospital are slow to confess themselves ill; they look upon pain of the belly as nothing but after-pains, and dread the active remedies which a confession of illness brings upon them; even after the confession the nurses are often dilatory in communicating it, and thus many hours used often to pass before I was called to the case, notwithstanding the activity, intelligence, and rare humanity of Mrs. Wright, the matron. There was another frequent cause of delay. In a very large proportion of cases, the disease began in the night; the patient would go to bed complaining of nothing, and be waked in the night or at daybreak by pain in the belly and chilliness; but the night-nurse thought it unnecessary to disturb anybody, and I lived two miles from the hospital. Whenever puerperal fever is prevalent in a hospital or neighbourhood, effectual means ought to be taken to obviate these causes of delay.

When I saw the patient very soon after the attack, I found a different group of symptoms to what I had witnessed in the latter stage; the pulse was not so quick, about 120 or 130; it was generally full and vibrating, or if small, it was hard and incompressible; the skin was hot, the belly was slightly full and tense, and very painful and tender, so that the patient could neither bear to have it pressed nor to turn from one side to the other in bed. These symptoms, especially the character of the pulse, looked like an inflammatory disease, for which the remedy was depletion; the appearances discovered on dissection corroborated this notion; remedies of an opposite kind had been tried unsuccessfully. Dr. Denman's and Dr. Gordon's account of the subject afforded encouragement for the trial of depletion, and I was still further encouraged by

the experience of Dr. Maton. We therefore resorted to general and local bleeding, and purging; the blood drawn from the arm formed a crassamentum which cupped and buffed in the greatest degree; the patients expressed relief from this treatment: it was soon clear that bleeding and purging did more good than any remedies we had tried, and our success in the treatment of this disease was decidedly increased. We were just in this state of opinion and practice, when the publication of Dr. Armstrong's treatise rendered us more bold in the use of our remedies, and induced us to employ depletion with more activity.

I now found that, provided I saw the patient within a few hours of the attack, I could generally arrest the disease. The mode of treatment was as follows: A vein was opened in the arm, with a wide orifice, so that the blood flowed in a full stream, and it was allowed to flow till the patient felt faint; the arm was then tied up, and her head was raised so as to encourage the faintness for many minutes. As soon as the faintness had subsided, she took from ten to twenty grains of calomel in a teaspoonful of arrow-root, and afterwards half an ounce of sulphate of magnesia dissolved in beef-tea or thin gruel, every other hour, until several copious evacuations were procured from the bowels; when the patient had thoroughly recovered from her faintness, from ten to twenty leeches were applied to the painful and tender parts of the abdomen; when the leeches had fallen off, a bag long and broad enough to cover the whole abdomen was stuffed with hot poultice, which was spread so as to form a cushion nearly an inch thick; this was laid hot over the whole abdomen, and renewed so often as to keep up heat and moisture. If the patient complained of the weight of the poultice, the bag was stuffed with scalded bran. We found this application of infinite value, not only as a means of encouraging the bleeding of the leech-bites, but also as a perpetual fomentation.

In the treatment of acute inflammation in the vital organs, the customary practice is to consider local bleeding as a milder means of effecting the same object as general bleeding, and to postpone it till the stage for the latter is over. To me it appears that they are calculated to effect two different objects, both of which are necessary at the beginning of the treatment; the one to reduce the violence of the general circulation, the other to empty the distended capillaries of the part. As long as the pulse is quick, full, and hard, it is in vain to take blood from the affected part: if we could com-

pletely empty its gorged capillary vessels, they would be instantly gorged again, whilst the heart and large arteries are injecting them with so much violence. On the other hand, after having reduced the force of the general circulation, the capillary vessels of the part often remain preternaturally injected: this I conclude from the fact, that the patient is often not relieved till local bloodletting has been used, and then is relieved immediately. Hence, as soon as the patient has recovered from the faintness occasioned by bleeding from the arm, leeches ought to be applied without delay.

I waited till the purgatives had operated fully, that I might know what impression the combined operation of general and local bloodletting and purging had produced on the disease, before deliberating about the employment of a second bloodletting. The common effect of these remedies was this: as long as the faintness lasted in the slightest degree, the pulse remained soft, and often slower, and the pain was much less, or ceased altogether; but an hour or two after the bleeding, when the circulation had recovered, the pain returned more or less, and the pulse regained much of its hardness or incompressibility. This state continued till the leeches had bled freely, and the purgatives had acted repeatedly and copiously. The state in which the patient was found after this, determined me whether or not to employ a second bleeding.

My two chief guides were the state of the abdomen and that of the pulse. If the abdomen was still painful and tender, and the pulse retained any of its hardness or incompressibility, or if the pulse was not so small and weak as to forbid a general bleeding, a vein was again opened in the arm, and the blood allowed to flow till it produced faintness, which was encouraged as after the first bleeding: on the contrary, if the pulse was small and weak, if the pain was gone and only soreness remained, I preferred a repetition of the leeches. Mere soreness without pain, and with a feeble state of the general circulation, is more surely relieved by local than by general bloodletting; and the best mode of employing it is by relays of leeches; as soon as the orifices of one set have done bleeding, to apply a fresh set, till the soreness and tenderness are gone. The rest of the treatment consisted in purging during the day by calomel and salts, the constant application of the bag of poultice or bran, and leeches to the abdomen till all the tenderness was gone.

The active treatment, that which will determine the fate of the patient, should be begun and ended during the first day; when



employed later, it is under great disadvantages, and with very diminished chances of success. When I consider the extent of the membrane which is affected, and the rapidity with which the effusions of inflammation are sometimes poured out, so far from wondering that the curable stage passes over so soon, it is to me a subject of wonder that the disease should ever be cured after it has lasted twelve hours. The more I have seen, read, and thought of this formidable disease, the more strongly am I impressed with the belief, that whatever may be the proper mode of treatment, it is not fairly tried unless employed in the early hours of the disease.

I think it useless to trouble the reader with a number of cases, which would greatly lengthen this paper, without any adequate advantage; but I will relate a few instances as specimens of the disease, and the way in which I used to treat it, during several seasons in which it was prevalent, between the years 1812 and 1820.

#### I.

A healthy young woman, an in-patient of the Westminster Lying-in Hospital, April 1815, was quite easy and well on the second day after her delivery, but late in the evening of that day she was seized with rigor, and pain and tenderness of the abdomen. After the rigor had subsided, the pain and tenderness of the abdomen became more severe, and she had a full vibrating pulse of 120. She took eight grains of calomel, a scruple of jalap, and a quarter of a grain of tartar emetic; a vein was opened in her arm, and she was bled to syncope. During this state the pain nearly ceased and the pulse fell to 88. I saw her about two hours afterwards; she was dozing, continued easier, and the pulse was feeble; but it had more than recovered its quickness, for it was 130. As she had vomited the calomel, jalap, and antimony, she took ten grains of calomel alone, and she was directed to take three drachms of sulphate of magnesia every other hour, till she was well purged. I saw her the next morning, at nine o'clock; she had had little sleep, the medicine had operated copiously three times, but the pulse was 124 and firm, and the pain as violent as before the bleeding. She was now bled again till she became faint; twenty-four ounces had been required for this object the first time, fifteen ounces were sufficient now. She again experienced great diminution of the pain, yet three hours afterwards it had returned, and the pulse was 124. She now took a dose of calomel and jalap, leeches were applied to the

abdomen, and she was to take the sulphate of magnesia if necessary; the purgatives acted plentifully seven times, the pain and tenderness of the belly rapidly diminished, and she was next day much better, but the pulse was still quick, being 120. She now took sudorific doses of antimony, and purgative doses of salts; the next day the pain and tenderness were almost gone; she continued the antimony and salts for two days longer, and recovered, but remained feeble for some time.

## II.

A single woman, on the third day after the birth of her first child, was attacked about two in the morning with a severe shivering, which lasted a quarter of an hour, and was followed by heat, perspiration, and pain of the abdomen, with great tenderness. I saw her early the next morning; the pain and tenderness continued, the lochia had ceased, the pulse was at 120, not vibrating, but firm. I had her bled till she fainted; the faintness was encouraged, and lasted whilst I remained with her, during which the pulse was slow, feeble, and occasionally ceased; she took castor oil every four hours till it operated plentifully; I was prevented seeing her again all that day. The next morning the pain and tenderness, though much less, were not gone; the pulse was 124, and not weak. She was now placed in the upright posture, and bled again to fainting. As soon as she recovered, she took fifteen grains of calomel, and was directed to take half an ounce of sulphate of magnesia every other hour till it operated copiously. The following day the abdomen was quite free from pain and tenderness, she could turn in bed, and bear pressure without uneasiness; her pulse was 104, and soft, and her bowels had been plentifully moved. The saline purgatives were continued two days longer, when, having no complaint, she was considered convalescent, but continued on low diet several days.

## III.

A general practitioner took me one evening to see his daughter, who had been delivered three days of her first child, and was just seized with symptoms of puerperal fever. He had had several cases of the disease among his own patients, and had lost two, so that when the malady attacked his own daughter he was greatly terrified; the emotions of his heart had deprived him of the use of his head, and he was as helpless as a child, although he was a sensible and

experienced man. We arrived at the house at eight o'clock in the evening; she had been shivering, but this had gone off, and she was now rather hot. The pain had begun in the left groin, then extended to the præcordia, and now was diffused over almost the whole abdomen. She could not turn in bed without pain, and could not bear pressure. Her pulse was 136 in a minute, and small; it felt soft, yet, on compressing it firmly, it struggled under the finger. She was a pale, delicate-looking young woman, subject to nervous complaints in her ordinary health, and apparently a bad subject for bleeding; but I was assured she was quite well with a pulse under 80 only four hours ago, and I had lately seen several fatal cases in which the loss of time and the inactivity of the treatment had been much regretted. I therefore directed several teacups to be brought, and determined to bleed her till she fainted. This required more blood than I expected from the appearance of my patient. Towards the end of the fifth cup I felt her pulse, on which I had kept my finger while the blood was flowing, begin to falter, and in an instant she fainted. Her pillow was removed and her head laid low till she began to revive, then it was raised till she fell faint again, and depressed again when she fainted away. I remained with her about half an hour after the closure of the vein. She felt no pain, and her pulse had fallen to 88; the blood had that indigo hue which portends buffing. It was agreed that as soon as she had completely recovered from her faintness she was to take ten grains of calomel, and ten of compound powder of tragacanth, in a teaspoonful of gruel, and four hours afterwards half an ounce of sulphate of magnesia, which was to be repeated every other hour until it operated freely; the abdomen was to be kept constantly covered by a bag of scalded bran. I saw her the next morning at twelve o'clock; during the night she had had a return of pain, with soreness of the abdomen, and the pulse had risen in frequency, but since the bowels had begun to operate, these symptoms had been abating, and when I saw her at noon I was quite easy about her. She had no pain excepting a minute or two before the bowels were moved. She could turn in bed, and bear pressure on the belly without suffering, and her pulse was 96. She continued the sulphate of magnesia and the bag of scalded bran during the remainder of the day, and at night took twenty drops of laudanum in a saline draught, and when I saw her the following day she was so completely convalescent that I



left her under the care of her father and the gentleman who had attended her.

I have repeatedly found myself, and seen others, at a loss, when bloodletting having been carried as far as I dared, and reduced the general circulation to the lowest ebb, sufficient pain and tenderness were left to make me anxious about the patient, and have found a full opiate and a warm poultice over the abdomen remove these symptoms.

#### IV.

A general practitioner came to me late one night (1820), begging me to go with him to a patient, who was in great danger from peritoneal inflammation after lying-in; the question about which he hesitated was whether to bleed her again or not. This was the third day of the disease. She had been bled three times to fainting, thirty leeches had been applied to the abdomen, and she had been well purged with large doses of calomel, followed by sulphate of magnesia, in infusion of senna. I found her bleached as white as the pillow on which she lay, her pulse was 130, feeble, and tremulous; she still complained of soreness in the abdomen, so that she flinched from pressure, and could not turn in bed. I should have thought it a hopeless case, but the abdomen was not tympanitic, she breathed calmly, and her face was not anxious. I advised the practitioner not to bleed her, but to cover the abdomen with a bag filled with scalded bran, and to give her twenty minims of the *Liq. Opii sedativus* immediately, and repeat it four hours afterwards. We saw her at ten the next morning; she had taken three doses of the opium, had slept soundly, had lost her pain and tenderness, and the pulse had fallen below 100. She continued the opiates every six hours for two days longer, and recovered, though she was for a long time pale and weak.

These cases will be sufficient to show the form of disease which was very prevalent in the hospital and in London, at several periods between the years 1812 and 1820, the mode in which I treated it, and the result. The practice was so decided, that if it had not been very right it must have been very wrong; if it had not been adapted to the cure of the disease, it would have been positively and manifestly injurious, as I am well assured by subsequent experience.

There was one circumstance in which the result of this practice

was very different in different cases, even in those which ultimately ended in recovery, and that was the state in which the patient was left when all pain and tenderness were gone; in some the patient was left with a calm pulse, and the recovery was speedy; in others the patient was left with a very rapid pulse, which kept me in anxiety for several days. Sometimes this quick pulse gradually subsided, and the patient slowly recovered her health; in others, after a day or two of this doubtful state, she became rapidly worse, and died, and on opening the body, the usual morbid appearances were found in the peritoneum. These different results might be commonly anticipated by distension of the abdomen and quick breathing, but not always; for some cases in which there was no distension terminated fatally.

Such was my practice when I saw the disease early, and this practice was commonly successful; but it was not always that I could treat it so decidedly and satisfactorily to my own mind. From various causes, quite distinct from the greater malignity of the disease, a physician treats it with much less chance of success in a lying-in hospital than in the lying-in chambers of educated and opulent people; the latter take the alarm at the first moment of attack, and directions are commonly strictly attended to; the patients too are generally in good health at the time of their delivery; but those of a lying-in hospital fall ill under very disadvantageous circumstances; they come in often in broken health, with habits of intemperance which ill fit them for low diet and active depletion; when they fall ill they often keep it secret many hours, and the vigilance of an excise officer would not prevent the friends who visit them from smuggling in spirit. There is another cause: the hospital is chiefly intended for the reception of married women, but there are two wards for single women pregnant for the first time. These are persons who have been seduced, but are not hardened in vice; they often suffer bitterly in mind during the dreary months of their pregnancy; and if they fall ill after delivery it is under the long influence of depressing passions; thus it is an old remark of those who have had much experience in lying-in hospitals, that the single women are peculiarly liable to fatal disease after delivery.

The large doses of calomel which we were in the habit of giving as purgatives, sometimes produced soreness of the gums. All the patients in whom this occurred recovered; there might be, but I do not remember, an exception. In one of these cases, I met the late

Dr. John Clarke, the only occasion on which I ever saw him. The patient was the wife of a butler in a family which he attended, and when they heard that she was in danger, they expressed a wish that he should see her. I met him at the hospital; the patient in the next bed had been attacked by the same disease, and he examined them both carefully, recognised the disease as the genuine puerperal fever, advised me to give bark and ammonia to the patient whom he came to see, remarking that she would never go out of the hospital alive. As she was under the care of Dr. Maton as well as myself, I did not feel justified in changing the treatment so completely, but a slight soreness of the gums, which she had on that day, became the next day a complete salivation, and she left the hospital convalescent a fortnight afterwards.

I do not remember, and I have no notes of any cases within the hospital in which I gave the oil of turpentine, as recommended by Dr. Brennan, of Dublin; but I gave it to four out-patients, and the result did not encourage me to give it to any more. In these cases the disease was so far advanced that I had no hope from bleeding.

Two drachms of oil of turpentine were given in a little gruel every four hours, for three doses, and with the last dose half an ounce of castor oil. Every one of these patients complained that it occasioned an increased burning pain in their bowels; they were freely purged by the medicine, but they all died. As an external rubefacient it was sometimes used in the hospital with considerable benefit. In one case, in which bleeding had been carried as far as we dare, without subduing the symptoms, and we thought very ill of the case, a piece of flannel was soaked in hot oil of turpentine, and spread over the whole abdomen. It had been on about twenty minutes, and I was just leaving the hospital, when my attention was arrested by a clamorous voice from the ward in which the patient lay. On going in with the matron, we found her vociferating most furiously that the turpentine had killed her. It had, indeed, produced extensive redness over the whole abdomen, but a few hours afterwards, when the superficial pain produced by the turpentine had subsided enough to enable us to inquire about the deeper pain and tenderness of the disease, we found them gone. She had been smartly purged, and the pulse had fallen below 100. I need scarcely add that she recovered.

Thus the conclusion to which I came was, that the puerperal fever which prevailed on several occasions between 1812 and 1820 was



a fever attended by acute inflammation of the peritoneum, that the inflammatory stage was often very short, soon terminating in great and irremediable effusion into the peritoneum, that the disease was curable only in the inflammatory stage by active bleeding and purging, and that although it was impossible to draw the line, and say when the inflammatory stage terminated in that of effusion, because it differed in length in different cases, yet that it was often incredibly short, and that the treatment had not a fair chance of success, unless begun during the early hours of the disease. Thus my experience agreed in all the principal points with that which had been so forcibly stated to the public by Dr. Armstrong and Mr. Hey.

For some years I supposed that the group of symptoms which indicate puerperal fever always indicated the same disease, differing only in degree; so that if a woman a few days after delivery had diffused pain and tenderness over the abdomen, with a rapid pulse, she must necessarily have a peritoneal fever, for which the only remedy was early and active depletion. This, I know, was the common opinion of the profession, and may be the common opinion now, although some practitioners may have arrived at a different conclusion. The first case which led me to suspect that there were exceptions to this rule, and afforded me some light on this difficult and important subject, was the following:

#### V.

The patient was a lady, twenty-six years of age, habitually thin, and long subject to occasional pains in the pelvis, which she called spasms of the womb, and which she relieved by opiates. She also frequently fell into a state of debility from which she was always restored by steel medicines, or chalybeate waters. This lady was delivered of her third child, after a short, easy, and natural labour. On the second morning after her delivery, being perfectly easy, and complaining of nothing, she took a purgative, as is usual, of salt and senna. It operated plentifully several times; then the stools became frequent and watery, with severe griping, and gradually the abdomen became painful and tender all over; the pain was without intermission, and the tenderness so great, that she could not bear the slightest pressure; nevertheless her skin was cool, and her pulse continued soft and not more than 80. This case occurred at a time when it was the prevailing notion in the profession that puerperal fever was invariably acute inflammation of the peritoneum, for which early, full,

and repeated bleedings form the essential remedy, and I found it very difficult to prevent this treatment being adopted in this case. The medical attendant of the family visited her several times a day, insisting that the pain arose from inflammation of the peritoneum, and urging the necessity of bleeding. I succeeded, however, in preventing this measure; the abdomen was kept constantly covered by a bag of scalded bran; she took ten grains of compound powder of ipecacuanha, every four hours; the pain soon diminished, and at length subsided; the tenderness remained longer, but ceased on the second day, leaving her quite free from any symptoms of disease. A few days afterwards, the bowels being confined and mild aperients not acting, she took another dose of salts and senna, which operated as the former, producing another attack of pain and tenderness of the abdomen, which was speedily relieved by fomentations and opium.

In this case there was not much danger of going wrong; the slow, soft pulse was a sufficient guide. Without stirring the question, whether the irritation excited by the purgative had excited the symptoms which I have described, the case taught me that a lying-in woman might have a diffused and permanent pain over the abdomen with tenderness, which neither I nor the family apothecary could distinguish from the pain and tenderness of peritoneal inflammation, which nevertheless did not depend on inflammation; at least it was unaccompanied by quickness of pulse, and it was cured without depletion, by fomentations and opium. All this was new to me, and interested me much; but I had not been brooding over it long, before I met with the following still more remarkable case:

## VI.

I was called up at day-break, and taken into the country to a surgeon's wife, who had been delivered a few days, and who was represented to be in great danger from peritoneal inflammation, so that she had already been seen by two medical men beside her husband. When I arrived I collected the following particulars. In her ordinary health she was pale, and subject to fits, either hysterical or epileptic; she had been confined four days, and her present symptoms had lasted rather more than one; they were permanent pain all over the abdomen, tenderness, and soreness, so that turning in bed was distressing to her; she had had no rigors nor chilliness; her pulse was 116, perfectly soft, and rather languid. One of the medical gentlemen, who had seen her at four o'clock that morning,

had taken from the arm two cups of blood; but although it had flowed in a full stream, the surface of the crassamentum was flat and red, and the bleeding had afforded her no relief. I ordered the abdomen to be covered by a linen bag stuffed with hot bread and water poultice, and I gave her twenty minims of laudanum; the poultice was to be renewed often enough to keep up heat; she was to continue the laudanum in doses of ten minims every four hours, and take nothing for diet but thin hot gruel. I breakfasted in the house; before leaving it, I went up to her chamber, and found that her abdomen was easier, her skin moist, and her pulse had fallen to 100. The next day, I received a note from her husband, to tell me that the pain and tenderness of the abdomen were quite gone, and that her pulse had fallen to 90. She now left off her opiates, but continued her fomentations, took a mild aperient, and recovered without any further interruption.

In this case there was more danger of going wrong than in the former; for the pulse was quick, and there was that group of symptoms which, when they attack a woman a few days after delivery, are generally supposed to indicate inflammation of the peritoneum. This was the opinion, not only of the husband of the patient, who was too much alarmed to judge coolly, but of the other practitioners, both experienced men. I was guided here by the previous and habitual constitution of the patient, by the perfect softness of the pulse, by the uninflamed appearance of the blood, and by the bleeding having afforded no relief. This case led me a step further than the former; it taught me, that a lying-in woman might have diffused and permanent pain and tenderness of the belly, with a rapid pulse, from a state which does not require bleeding, and is not relieved by it, but which is speedily relieved by fomentations and opiates.

## VII.

I went a considerable distance from London, to a lady who had just been delivered, and who was represented to be in great danger. When I arrived I found two medical men in the house, who informed me that the patient had been delivered that morning, but soon afterwards had had a hæmorrhage so violent, that they thought at one time she was dead, but the hæmorrhage had ceased, and they began to have hopes of her recovery. They then led me to her chamber, where I found a lady about thirty years of age, without the slightest colour in her face or lips, speaking only in a whisper, with a pulse



like a thread, and a cold skin, still so faint as to require the frequent use of brandy. The hæmorrhage had ceased, and I felt the uterus in the hypogastrium small and firm. There was therefore only one object, and that an urgent one, to revive and support the ebbing powers of life. I remained with her the rest of the day and the night, during which she was supplied with small cups of hot gruel containing brandy; and at shorter intervals, whenever she felt faint, she took a tea-spoonful of pure brandy, or a piece of bread soaked in it. The faintness gradually ceased, the skin became warm, the pulse more distinct. The cordials were therefore withdrawn, and when I left her the following morning, it was agreed that she should take no other diet than milk with toast and gruel. I heard no more of her for three days, when, on the fourth day after her delivery, I received a letter by post, informing me that she was going on well, and that her pulse was at 80. I had not received this letter above two hours, when an express arrived at my door desiring me to hurry to her as fast as possible. When I arrived I found the same medical men in the house, who told me that she had that morning been suddenly attacked with a severe rigor, and violent pain in the abdomen; that when the rigor went off the skin became hot, and the pulse rapid; that the belly was painful, and very tender. They lost no time, but opened a vein in the arm, and took away, they told me, thirty ounces of blood, on which she became very faint, and still continued so. When I went up to her chamber, I found her with sharp features, cold and clammy on her forehead and cheeks, with a pulse scarcely to be felt; the blood was not buffed. She died before I left the house. The body was not opened, but I could not help comparing this case with those which I have previously related, and conjecturing, that if, instead of bloodletting, opium and fomentations had been used, the result might have been more fortunate.

Thus far my knowledge of these cases was confined to the symptoms during life, and to the influence of remedies; but it was not long before I had an opportunity of ascertaining the appearances on examination after death.

#### VIII.

A practitioner sent for me to see a patient, of whom he gave me the following account: She was habitually delicate, and subject to hysteria. After an easy labour of her eighth child, her after-pains had been long and severe, but her pulse was not quick. At six in

the evening of the second day it was soft, and under 80. At four o'clock the next morning, the practitioner was called out of his bed, and found her complaining of great pain and tenderness over the whole abdomen. She had been vomiting; her pulse was quick, but small and weak, and her skin temperate. He immediately bled her, letting the blood flow till she fainted. He next gave her five grains of calomel, and soon afterwards a dose of salts and senna, but the latter was vomited. Two hours after the first bleeding, the pain not having been relieved, he bled her again to fainting. Twelve leeches were applied to the abdomen, and a pill was given her containing three grains of opium. Having received this account, I went into the chamber of the patient. Her face was ghastly; it was difficult to keep her out of a fainting fit; her skin was cold and clammy, and her pulse so quick, small and fluttering, it could not be counted. I took off the leeches and endeavoured to revive her by warmth and cordials, but she died in the evening, about six hours after my visit, and about thirty from the beginning of pain. The body was opened next day. The peritoneum was healthy, but pale: there were between one and two ounces of colourless serum in its cavity; the abdominal viscera were all healthy, but pale; the uterus was contracted in the ordinary degree.

I feel no doubt, that if, instead of bleeding, the belly had been covered with a perpetual fomentation, and an opiate had been given every four hours, this patient would in a few hours have been quite well.

Of the last four cases, three occurred at a time when there was no prevailing disease in the Lying-in Hospital, and, as far as I knew, none in London or its neighbourhood; but the second occurred in a neighbourhood where I was told puerperal fever was very prevalent, and two women were lying dead of it when I was there. Within a week after I had seen this case, I was sent for to the same place to see another case of a similar description, which I treated by opium successfully.

These cases opened to me a new view of the subject; they taught me that a lying-in woman might have permanent pain and tenderness of the abdomen, with a rapid pulse, independent of acute inflammation of the peritoneum, or any other part; that these symptoms may depend on a state which bloodletting does not relieve, and which, if this remedy is carried as far as it requires to be carried in peritonitis, may terminate fatally; and that the most

effectual remedies are opiates and fomentations. Most of the patients who were the subjects of these attacks were women who in their ordinary health were delicate and sensitive; the attack sometimes seemed to originate in violent after-pains, gradually passing into permanent pain and tenderness, resembling inflammation; or in the painful operation of an active purgative; but it could sometimes be traced to no satisfactory cause; the patient had a common labour, and had experienced no unusual cause of debility or irritation. The pulse in all these cases, although quick, was soft and feeble; this together with the previous constitution of the patient were my chief guides; when I could trace it to any irritating cause, such as a gripping purge, and when blood had been already drawn without relief, and without being buffed, I saw my way still clearer. When I doubted, I applied leeches to the abdomen.

The cases which I have related, and others similar to them, were speedily and completely relieved by the remedies which I have mentioned. There seemed to be nothing dangerous in this form of disease, provided the nature of it was not mistaken, and improper remedies not used; yet it so strikingly resembled peritoneal inflammation, that it was invariably taken for it by the practitioners who witnessed it, all of whom possessed at least that average quantity of sense and knowledge on which the public must extensively depend. These cases, though sufficiently numerous to attract my notice, and produce a strong impression on my mind, were nevertheless only occasional occurrences. I had never seen them in numbers at the same time; they occurred at comparatively long intervals, and at times when there was no prevalent disease among lying-in women; they resembled sporadic diseases, both in the rarity of their occurrence, and in the facility with which they were cured. At the hospital I saw two or three cases, in which, after the ordinary symptoms of puerperal fever had terminated fatally and the body was opened, the usual morbid appearances were not found; nothing appeared but a moderate quantity of fluid stained with blood. I thought something, but not much, of these. When cases occur at long intervals, the effect of one fades in the mind before that of another is made, so that they do not mingle, and produce a distinct impression; but when they come in clusters at the same time, they rouse the thinking powers of the mind; one case casts a strong light upon the other, and the result is the formation of decided opinions.



In the winter of the year 1824, puerperal fever was prevalent and fatal in London and its neighbourhood. I had resigned my office at the Westminster Lying-in Hospital, and did not know, or do not remember, what was going on there; but I saw this disease repeatedly in consultation, and heard of it among my medical friends. Several instances occurred of its prevalence among the patients of particular practitioners, whilst others who were equally busy met with few or none. One instance of this kind was very remarkable: a general practitioner in large midwifery practice lost so many patients from puerperal fever, that he determined to deliver no more for some time, but that his partner should attend in his place. This plan was pursued for one month, during which not a case of the disease occurred in their practice. The elder practitioner being then sufficiently recovered, returned to his practice; but the first patient he attended was attacked by the disease and died. A physician who met him in consultation soon afterwards about a case of a different kind, and who knew nothing of his misfortune, asked him whether puerperal fever was at all prevalent in his neighbourhood; on which he burst into tears, and related the above circumstances.

Among the cases which I saw this season in consultation, four occurred in one month in the practice of one medical man, and all of them terminated fatally.

## IX.

The first case occurred in a lady, who had been delivered of her first child, after a long and severe labour, not from deformity of bones, but from rigidity of the soft parts and the bulk of the child; it occupied nearly three days. When visited the day after delivery, she was found complaining of considerable pain in the abdomen, great tenderness, oppression at the præcordia, and difficult breathing. The pulse was rapid, but the most remarkable symptom was immense distension of the abdomen, which separated the recti muscles to the distance of two hands' breadth, and protruded between them the anterior wall of the abdomen to a considerable elevation. The projection was returned into the abdomen, and supported by straps of adhesive plaster. The feebleness of the pulse, the exhausted state of the patient, prevented blood from being drawn, but a gentle purge was given. After this had operated, the pain being worse, twenty drops of laudanum were given, and repeated every two hours

for several doses; but she sunk quietly, and died on the third day after delivery. The body was opened the next day. The intestines were found enormously distended with air, but in the peritoneum there was neither redness, adhesion, nor effusion of any kind.

#### X.

The second case occurred after a common labour of the fourth child. An opiate was ordered for the after-pains, and the patient was quite well when visited on the second day. On the evening of the third she was found to have a diffused pain and tenderness of the belly, with pulse of 140, and not weak. The symptoms had not lasted six hours, the bowels had been emptied by a purgative, fourteen ounces of blood were taken away immediately, and two grains of calomel, with five of compound powder of ipecacuanha, were given every four hours. A few hours afterwards, the pain and tenderness continuing, ten ounces more of blood were taken away, by which she was much relieved. The next day she was not so well, the belly was distended and uneasy, the pulse was quick and weak, and the aspect of the patient very unpromising. A blister was applied, and the calomel was continued, but she sunk rapidly and died, little more than two days from the commencement of the symptoms. The body was opened the next day, but there was neither redness nor adhesion of the peritoneum, nor effusion of any kind into its cavity.

#### XI.

In the third case, the symptoms began thirty-six hours after delivery. The remedies employed were a bleeding of twelve ounces, an emetic, a purgative, and the opium and calomel, with a view of affecting the constitution as soon as possible with mercury; but the rapidity of the disease baffled all these remedies, and the patient died on the third day. The body was opened the following day, and no vestiges of inflammation were found in the peritoneum.

#### XII.

In the last case the patient was delivered after a labour attended by no unusual circumstances. She was seen in the evening of the second day, when she appeared quite well, complained of nothing, and had a slow pulse. She continued well till seven the next morning, when she was seized with pain and tenderness of the belly, but it was not swelled. I saw her at ten o'clock, that is, three hours from

the commencement of the attack. Her pallid and weakly appearance, the feebleness of her pulse, the total absence of those symptoms in which I had formerly been so successful with the lancet, and its unfavourable effects in the cases in which I had seen it employed this season, made me unwilling to employ it. But the patient's husband was anxious that some leeches should be applied; because a few years before she had recovered from what appeared to him a similar illness, under the care of a very eminent physician, from the use of leeches; and the aspect of the case was so decidedly unpromising, that we were unwilling to deprive him of this consolation. Twelve, therefore, were applied to the abdomen, without loss of time, and twelve more subsequently.

On the evening of the second day of her illness, when I went into her bed-chamber, I found her medical attendant at the bed-side with a decanter of wine, of which he was giving her a spoonful. She was free from pain, calm, and clear-headed; but she was pale, faint, breathless, cold, and had little pulse. Excepting only restlessness, she looked exactly like a woman dying from hæmorrhage. The cordials revived her for a few hours, but she died the next morning at four o'clock. The last lying-in patient whom her nurse had attended had died of a similar disease, equally rapid in its course.

I do not relate these cases to prove the inefficiency of full and early depletion, for in two it was not used, and in the others not carried to an extent which would satisfy the advocates for this practice. The treatment was chiefly conducted by one of the best practitioners I have ever known, but who had already lost confidence in the lancet in the epidemic then prevalent; but I produce them on account of the appearances on dissection, which indicate a disease very different to that which occasions a copious effusion of lymph and serum into the peritoneum.

Most of the cases I saw this season were the patients of others, and I visited them only occasionally; the task of watching and superintending the treatment of course devolving on the ordinary attendant. But I will relate one case which I saw from beginning to end, and which bore a striking resemblance to the others.

### XIII.

The patient was a lady, whom I had attended in several confinements, but who was this time to lie in at a short distance from town,



under the care of the neighbouring surgeon. She was a plump, pale, relaxed woman, with a languid circulation, and subject to nervous attacks. She had a weak stomach, was often troubled by flatulence, at which times dry friction with the hand along the spine would produce the expulsion of a prodigious torrent of air from the mouth with an extraordinary noise; this was her state in her ordinary health. Her labour was very quick; when visited on the second evening she was quite well; the following morning, being still well, she took the usual purgative of salts and senna; it operated violently and painfully, and this was followed by diffused pain and tenderness of the abdomen with a rapid pulse. She could neither turn in bed nor bear pressure on the abdomen; but her skin was not hot, and her pulse not hard. This was the state in which I saw her about eight hours from the commencement of pain. I gave her twenty minims of Battley's laudanum, to be repeated every two hours for three doses; and I ordered the abdomen to be covered with a bag of scalded bran. I saw her in the evening at eight o'clock; the pain of the abdomen was easier, but the pulse was rapid; she could not bear to turn, or to be pressed upon; the belly was larger than in the morning, and the breathing hurried. I now explained to her husband the danger of her condition, and said that if he wished for a consultation, in justice to the patient and to the physician, it ought to be now, not later; about two hours afterwards we succeeded in procuring the attendance of an eminent and able physician. The chief question was about bloodletting; the aspect of the case was very unfavourable, and I believe the consideration that, if it terminated fatally, more regret would be felt at the neglect of bloodletting than at the employment of it, in the prevalent state of medical opinion on the subject, determined us to use it. As it was now, if ever, that bloodletting was to be useful, we determined to carry it to faintness. The gentleman who bled her did not practise midwifery, and had no experience of such cases; but when he felt the pulse before bleeding, he remarked that though quick (it was nearly 130) it was soft. The blood spouted from the arm during the filling of the first two cups, and the fifth cup was more than half full before she felt faint; twelve leeches were next applied to the belly, and these were succeeded by the bag of scalded bran; she took a full opiate that night, and the following morning two drachms of sulphate of magnesia every four hours. When we met, however, the following day, she was much worse; her belly was tumid, her breathing short,

her pulse quick and tremulous, and her mind rambled. An attempt was now made to support her with cordial diet, but she became rapidly worse, and died in the middle of the next night, less than forty-eight hours from the commencement of her symptoms. The body was not opened.

In all these cases, the striking circumstances were the rapidity of the disease, which was shorter than three days, and the absence of morbid appearances in the peritoneum after death, although during life the whole surface of the abdomen had been painful and tender, and the pulse had been rapid as in puerperal fever. Death came on like faintness; the patients got weaker and weaker, hour by hour, and then died.

Whilst this form of disease has been going on in London and its neighbourhood, it has not been unknown in other parts of the island. In Dr. Farre's *Journal of Morbid Anatomy*,\* Mr. Dalrymple, of Norwich, has described a marked case of this kind.

#### XIV.

The patient, forty-two hours after a very quick labour, was seized with shivering, succeeded by heat, a hard pulse of 130, great pain and tenderness of the abdomen, with some swelling. She was seen *five hours* from the attack, and eighteen ounces of blood were taken from the arm; a calomel purge was given, followed by a mixture of salts and senna. Six hours afterwards she was visited again; her pulse was now quick but weaker, and her abdomen more tumid, and exquisitely tender. Twenty-four leeches were applied to the lower part of the abdomen; an ample blister to the upper; and fifty drops of the sedative solution of opium were given at a dose. In the evening the pain was less violent, but the tenderness undiminished. Mercurials, with saline aperients and hyoscyamus, were given, but the next morning she was found sinking. At noon the collapse was general, and she seemed unconscious of what was going on around her in the chamber. At five in the afternoon she died, only forty-five hours from the commencement of the disease. On opening the body, no increased vascularity of the peritoneum, no adhesion of its contiguous surfaces, no abundant effusion of lymph and serum were found; the only morbid appearances were slight redness along the Fallopian tubes, and about two ounces of turbid serum in the

\* No. I, page 38.

cavity of the peritoneum. Within seven weeks seven similar cases had occurred to different practitioners in the neighbourhood of Norwich, and all died within fifty hours of the attack. The patient, whose case I have related, was the wife of a farmer, in whose dairy apartment a number of cows after calving had been attacked by a disease similar to puerperal fever, and she had taken great interest in the treatment of the sick animals. This occurred in the winter of 1827 and 1828.

These are the chief facts in the case, related by Mr. Dalrymple; but, being anxious to know the leading points in the other seven cases, I wrote to him for them, and the following is the substance of his answer, which I shall throw into the form of a table, in which the reader will see at one view the character of the pulse, the time at which bloodletting was employed, the extent to which it was carried, and the appearance of the blood.

Case.	Pulse.	Time of Bleeding.	Quantity.	Appearance of Blood.
1	hard	5 hours	{ 8 ounces, 24 leeches	{ less buffed and cupped than was expected
2	hard	4 hours	42 ounces	buffed and cupped
3	quick, but not hard	very early	{ 18 ounces, and leeches	{ not cupped
4	... ..	7 hours	{ bled from arm, and leeches	{ neither buffed nor cupped
5	soft	... ..	24 ounces	cupped and buffed
6	not hard	... ..	{ 18 ounces, and leeches	{ neither buffed nor cupped
7	{ very quick and feeble }	... ..	very large	...
8	quick and feeble	... ..	very large	...

In the winter of 1827 and 1828 cases of peritoneal fever were very common among the in- and out-patients of the Westminster Lying-in Hospital; and a journal was kept, and an account of them published, by Mr. J. A. Hingeston, who was then residing as house-surgeon of the hospital.\* These cases were all attended by pain and tenderness of the belly, with a rapid pulse; the pain remitted, the skin was moist, and the pulse full and compressible. Most of them were cured, without the lancet, by keeping the abdomen covered with a large, thin, hot linseed-meal poultice, and giving ten

\* See London Medical Gazette, No. XI.



grains of compound powder of ipecacuanha, repeated till the pain was gone. If the bowels were constipated, a purgative was previously given; if they were not so, the purgative was postponed till the pain had subsided. In one case, the dry skin and sharp pulse indicating that the affection of the peritoneum was acutely inflammatory, twenty ounces of blood were drawn from the arm; ten grains of compound powder of ipecacuanha, with two of calomel were given, and calomel alone was repeated every six hours; twelve leeches were applied to the abdomen, and afterwards a linseed-meal poultice. The gums became sore in twenty-four hours, and the patient recovered; but after the bleeding she had frequent faintings for several hours, and 'life was reduced to a low ebb.' A striking contrast this to the way in which bleeding to double this extent was borne in the peritoneal fevers from 1810 to 1820. Mr. Hingeston thinks that these cases, which are cured by opium, are the first stage, a lower degree of that acute inflammation which requires the lancet.

For the following particulars I am indebted to Dr. Ferguson, one of the present physicians to the Westminster Lying-in Hospital.

During the late autumn and winter, there has been much sickness for so small a hospital. To say nothing of the out-patients, sixty-two in-patients were admitted between September 11, 1828, and February 20, 1829; of these, twenty-eight (that is, nearly half the number) had peritoneal fever; and of these, seven died, that is, one in four. A large proportion of them were cured at once by ten grains of the compound powder of ipecacuanha, every three or four hours for three doses, and a hot linseed-meal poultice over the whole belly. Sometimes this treatment removed the pain, but not the soreness; but this was generally removed by the application of leeches. As soon as the symptoms were subdued, the bowels were opened by a mild purge; when these remedies failed the case was a bad one. It may be said by the advocates for bloodletting, that these bad cases might have been saved if they had been blooded and purged early and actively; but in those in which the lancet was used, however early, its effect was discouraging. The patients fainted after losing a few ounces, the blood bore no marks of inflammation, and the remedy was followed by great and immediate exhaustion; even leeches, when applied in considerable numbers, and when they bled profusely, in some cases seemed to occasion great exhaustion. But in the cases which I have related from my own experience the lancet was used as early and actively as the warmest advocate for depletion

could wish. Case No. 6 was blooded without relief, and was immediately relieved by opiates and fomentations. Cases 7 and 8 were blooded immediately on the attack of pain, the former to thirty ounces at ounce, the latter twice to faintness, besides leeches, calomel and senna mixture, and they immediately and speedily sunk under the remedies. Of the four cases which occurred to one practitioner, No. 10 was blooded immediately after the attack in the evening, and the bleeding was repeated the following morning. The Case No. 13 began during the violent operation of a purgative; the patient was blooded to faintness about fourteen hours after the attack, the blood was not buffed, and she never rose out of the exhaustion which followed. In the case related by Mr. Dalrymple the patient was blooded freely five hours from the attack, and the effect was similar.

In Dr. Farre's remarks, introductory to his Journal, he states that 'at the east end of London, not far from the river, this disease (puerperal fever) proved still more fatal during the month of March (1825). One surgeon informed the editor that he had lost seven, another four, in all of which the disease was treated at the instant of its formation by active bloodletting. A physician-accoucheur, who attended in consultation many of these cases, stated to him, that out of thirteen cases eleven died; that all which had been bled died; and that the only two which recovered had not been bled, having been treated by turpentine.'

From a severe illness this winter, which has unfitted me for the active duties of my profession, I have seen little of the peritoneal fevers of this season, but of what I did see the following case seems to me worth relating.

#### XV.

Mrs.— had had, after a former lying-in, a loosening of the bones of the pelvis, from which she had suffered long, but had completely recovered, and was in good health and strong on her legs up to the moment of her present labour. She was delivered on Saturday morning at seven o'clock, and continued quite well till Sunday afternoon at two. She had then a shivering, which lasted about twenty minutes, succeeded by dry heat, a quick pulse and pain all over the abdomen; for this she took a purgative, which operated fifteen times. On Monday afternoon at two o'clock she had another shivering, and continued feverish and restless. Opiates and aperients were given, and during Monday and Tuesday the pain of the abdomen had so nearly subsided



that it attracted no notice: still she never felt quite easy in that part. On Tuesday evening she was feverish, restless, and had pain of the head, for which leeches were applied; and afterwards, late at night, six ounces of blood were taken from the arm. At this time she complained of no pain either in the belly or back, and could turn in bed with perfect ease; her symptoms were merely fever, restlessness, and head-ache. Early the next morning (Wednesday) her attendant was called up to her, and found that she had passed the night without sleep, and that new symptoms were added to her former ones; they were pain and tenderness of the abdomen, and still more pain in the sacrum, where the bones of the pelvis had formerly separated. As the pulse was 120, and hard, fourteen ounces of blood were taken from the arm, and I saw her for the first time this day at one o'clock. The pain and tenderness of the abdomen were still so severe, especially in the right iliac region, that she could not breathe without stopping and crying out; and turning from her side to her back was so painful, partly from the tenderness of the belly, and partly from the pain of the sacrum, that it occupied a minute or two; the uterus was large, and could not bear pressure; above the umbilicus the abdomen was soft, and without tension: the breasts contained no milk, the lochia were scanty, the pulse, which before the bleeding in the morning had been hard, was soft, and 120; the bowels had been freely purged, and had acted that morning. The treatment agreed upon now was as follows: Twelve leeches were to be applied to the painful part of the abdomen; it was then to be kept constantly covered with a linseed-meal poultice, and when the bites ceased to bleed, fourteen more leeches were applied, succeeded by the poultice. She took twenty minims of the sedative solution of opium immediately; she was to take two grains of calomel every three hours, and five grains of the compound powder of ipecacuanha every six hours, that is with every other dose of the calomel. When we met the next day (Thursday) every symptom was better excepting the pulse; the pain and tenderness of the abdomen were gone, and she could bear firm pressure, and could breathe without inconvenience; the belly was soft and undistended; the uterus was much smaller, and the lochia copious. She was in a warm perspiration, and her breasts were full of milk, but her pulse was still at 120. As the bowels had not acted for thirty hours, the compound powder of ipecacuanha was discontinued, and a dose of salts and senna given; this was at two in the afternoon. At eleven



in the evening, when her attendant visited her, she was not so well: she was in no pain, but her cheek was red, she was in a great heat and perspiration, and there was something about her aspect which he did not like. When I went the next day (Friday) to the consultation, I found the family in alarm, and was told that there had been a great change in the patient for the worse. The pain and tenderness of the abdomen had never returned, but her mind was confused; she was distressed with excessive flatulence, and the abdomen had suddenly become large and tympanitic; yet the pulse was only 116; the purgative had operated copiously, the gums were sore, and the tongue swelled. I had omitted to say that there was an inflammation about the right wrist which threatened to break. From the state of the mouth the calomel was withdrawn, and a dose of turpentine and castor oil ordered every three hours. In the evening she was still worse, bursting with flatulence, more confused in mind, and with a quicker pulse—128. She had had many little fluid motions, with a vast quantity of wind. The danger seemed so near that we made no appointment for the next day, and I never saw her again. She died that morning at seven o'clock, that is, about fifty hours from the second attack of pain of the belly.

The body was opened the next day by Mr. Stanley. Putrefaction had made rapid progress for the time. The orifice in the vein of the arm, made four days before, had opened after her death, and discharged about half a pint of blood. On opening the abdomen the intestines were found immensely distended with air; there was no redness of peritoneum, no adhesion of its surfaces. In the lower part of the abdomen there was about three ounces of a bloody transparent fluid. In both ovaries the internal glandular structure was entirely gone, leaving only a hollow empty capsule; in that of the right ovary there was an aperture. The Fallopian tube on both sides contained pus, not at the uterine, but at the fimbriated end. There was no pus in the uterus; this organ was perfectly healthy: its veins were examined, and were undiseased; its inner surface was of a bright pink, more irregular at the part where the placenta generally adheres. The joints of the pelvis were next examined; the symphysis pubis moved readily: on cutting into it the cartilages were sound, but the space between them contained a bloody fluid. The sacro-iliac joints were still more affected; the sacrum projected from the ossa innominata half an inch; within the joint was a bloody fluid mixed with some loose lymph.

In reflecting on the above narrative it is natural and important to ask, what occasioned the fair prospect which presented itself on Thursday to be on Friday so suddenly overcast? Two things were done; the opium was withdrawn, and a purgative of senna and salts was given. Would it have been better to have merely withdrawn the opium, and left the calomel alone to act as a purgative? or if a purgative had been given, would a different kind, such as aloes, have been less liable to bring on this enormous flatulence of the alimentary canal? Whoever thinks that a copious effusion of serum and lymph is the essential appearance after death in puerperal fever, will of course conclude that this lady did not die of that disease, but of disease in the joints of the pelvis. Let him reflect, however, 1st, that a loosening of the joints of the pelvis is common as a chronic disease, but comparatively rare as an acute one which is rapidly fatal; 2nd, that the history of the case during life is exactly that of puerperal fever; and 3rd, that the scanty effusion of bloody serum, instead of a copious effusion of serum and lymph, is exactly the appearance after death which has been found in the puerperal fever of this and the last few years. I am inclined to believe that it was a case of puerperal fever, made irreparable by being complicated with disease in the sacro-iliac joints; but these are questions which it is easier to put than to answer, and they will be answered by readers more or less confidently, not in proportion to the accuracy and extent of their knowledge, but in proportion to the confidence of their disposition.

The foregoing facts, and many others similar which I could relate, permit me no longer to doubt that there is a form of peritoneal fever in child-bed, which, although it has the ordinary symptoms—pain and tenderness of the belly, with a rapid pulse—is very different from the peritoneal fevers which prevailed between 1810 and 1820; different in its duration, which is much shorter; in the way in which it is affected by bloodletting; and lastly, in the morbid appearances discovered after death. This form of the disease, like the acute inflammatory form, may occur only occasionally or sporadically, when it is readily and speedily cured by opiates, fomentations, gentle aperients, and sometimes leeches; or it may become prevalent or epidemic, and consequently more malignant; in other words, more fatal and difficult to cure.

The most remarkable circumstance which the experience of the last few years has taught us about peritoneal fevers is, that they



may occur in their most malignant and fatal form, and yet leave few or no vestiges in the peritoneum after death. The state of this membrane, indicated by pain and tenderness of the abdomen, with a rapid pulse, appears to be not one uniform state, but one which varies so much in different cases, that a scale might be formed of its several varieties; this scale would begin with little more than a nervous affection often removable by soothing remedies, and when terminating fatally, leaving no morbid appearances discoverable after death. Next above this, a state in which this nervous affection is combined with some degree of congestion, indicated in the cases which recover, by the relief afforded by leeches, and in the cases which die, by slight redness in parts of the peritoneum, and a slight effusion of serum, sometimes colourless, sometimes stained with blood. Above this might be placed those cases in which there are, in the peritoneum, the effusions of inflammation without its redness, namely, a pale peritoneum and no adhesions, lymph like a thin layer of soft custard, and a copious effusion of serum rendered turbid by soft lymph. Lastly, the vestiges of acute inflammation of the peritoneum, namely, redness of this membrane, adhesion of its continuous surfaces, a copious effusion of serum, and large masses of lymph.

The experience of the last few years has brought me to this conclusion: that the sanguine hopes which were entertained, a few years ago, that the peritoneal fevers of lying-in women are always of an acute inflammatory type, and always to be cured by early bleeding and purging, as they were not borne out by the reasoning employed, so they have not been confirmed by subsequent experience.

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It is useless to look back on the past, unless for the purpose of guiding our conduct in the future. How are we to act, when new epidemics arise among lying-in women, so as to diminish as much as possible their fearful mortality?

The first and most important object—that without which all others will be useless—is to make such arrangements as will ensure to the practitioner a sight of the patient immediately after the attack. I believe that half the mortality which these epidemics occasion depends on delay, on so much time being lost before efficient treatment is employed, that the curable stage is over before this treatment has begun. Whatever may be the nature of the case



or epidemic, and whatever may be the remedies essential to its cure, they have not a fair chance of success unless employed during the first hours of the disease. The arrangements necessary to prevent delay must depend on those who have the immediate charge of lying-in women, namely, the physicians of lying-in hospitals, and, in private families, on those who deliver the patients and have the charge of them. These must depend on the more immediate attendants, nurses, commonly a most intractable race; but no pains ought to be spared to make them understand the symptoms which demand attention, and no temptations to induce them to send for the practitioner the instant these symptoms appear. The latter must not, for fear of being troubled by false alarms, shrink from a plan so essential to the life of his patients, to his success, his reputation, and, I should think, his peace of mind.

During the first day or two of the disease, while active remedies are employed, and the life of the patient is hanging in the balance, the practitioner can hardly do his duty without seeing the patient so often that he almost lives with her, and becomes not only her physician, but her nurse. I shall be told that this is impossible; so much the worse; it is not the less urgently necessary.

The next thing that I would urge on practitioners of midwifery, is, to undertake the treatment of these diseases with the belief that they depend not on one and the same state, acute inflammation of the peritoneum, demanding one and the same treatment, bleeding and purging, but that they depend on different states in different cases, and epidemics, which require so much caution and discrimination to distinguish, that the most cautious and discriminating practitioner will sometimes err. They should approach the subject in the spirit of their great master, Sydenham, who, in speaking of epidemic diseases, tells us that 'their difference is apparent, not only from 'their peculiar symptoms, but also from the different methods of 'cure they respectively require; that though they seem to agree in 'their external face, and certain symptoms in common, they are in 'reality of very different and dissimilar natures; that the same 'method which cures in the middle of the year may possibly prove 'destructive at the conclusion of it; and that, when a new species 'arose, he was doubtful how to proceed, and, notwithstanding the 'utmost caution, could scarce ever preserve one or two of his first 'patients from danger.' There are no diseases to which these

remarks are more applicable than the peritoneal fevers of lying-in women.

Lastly, I would urge practitioners of midwifery to make themselves familiarly acquainted with those modes of treatment which appear on competent testimony to have been, at times at least, most successful, so as to have them ready to apply when the occasion occurs. In most of the epidemics which I have read of or witnessed, many cases occurred, and many lives were lost, before the practitioners, who were concerned about them, had time to overcome the panic which they produced, to put their knowledge in order, and proceed to the treatment of the disease with clear and methodical views. Much of this would be avoided if they previously made up their minds, out of what remedies their selection ought to be made. In acquiring this knowledge it is not superfluous to say, that it will be of no value unless it is rigidly and scrupulously accurate, consisting of a minute knowledge, not only of the remedies themselves, but of the times for employing them, the extent to which they ought to be carried, and all the circumstances on which their successful employment depends. A want of this strict and minute accuracy is one of the causes why remedies, which have been so successful in some hands, so often fails in others.

The remedies for the efficacy of which there is most evidence are, 1st, bleeding and purging; 2d, emetic doses of ipecacuanha; 3d, opiates internally, and poultices externally to the abdomen; 4th, mercury given so as to affect the constitution; 5th, oil of turpentine.

I. There is a class of peritoneal fevers in which the affection of the peritoneum is acute inflammation, and that of the constitution is inflammatory fever, although this inflammatory state often lasts only a few hours. These cases may occur not only occasionally or sporadically, but become prevalent or epidemic. On this point, those who wrote toward the end of the last century were in an error, supposing that whenever the disease was epidemic, it was of a low typhoid type; there can be no doubt, that among the peritoneal fevers of lying-in women there are inflammatory epidemics, but how are we to know that the case or the epidemic is of this kind? by attending to what Sydenham called the 'Constitution of the year,' that is, in plain language, the prevailing state of the human body indicated by its prevailing diseases, and by the modes of treatment which these diseases bear and require; by the character of the



pulse during the early hours of the disease, and by the effect of depletion. Thus, when the prevailing diseases are inflammatory, and are best cured by depletion, when the pulse at the beginning of the disease is vibrating, hard, or, although small, is incompressible, when the skin is not only hot, but dry, and when, after the treatment of a few cases, it appears that those have recovered best in which bleeding and purging have been used early and freely, there is every reason to believe that we have lighted on an inflammatory epidemic, and that depletion is the means on which we must depend for the cure. I have said so much about the necessity of employing it early, and with sufficient activity to extinguish the disease during the first day, that I need not repeat it. Some able practitioners, after the first full bloodletting, have advised the pulse to be closely watched, and as soon as it has recovered its quickness and hardness, to open the vein again, and draw a small quantity of blood, and so on at short intervals till the pain is gone and the pulse ceases to be hard; this, of course, will not be necessary many times. M. Husson, of the Hôtel Dieu, who is so distinguished for his skill in puerperal diseases, after one bleeding of fifteen or twenty ounces, repeats a smaller bleeding of eight or ten ounces, once in six hours, during the first day, till the inflammation is subdued.

II. Emetics of ipecacuanha, once so successfully employed by M. Doulcet, in the Hôtel Dieu in Paris, have such strong evidence in their favour, that they deserve a fuller trial than they seem ever to have received in this country; the form of the disease in which M. Doulcet employed them, was that which occasions profuse effusion into the peritoneum. The conditions under which they ought to be given are these: 1, they are to be used at the instant of attack; 2, they are to be repeated every day till the symptoms are subdued; 3, in the intervals between the operation of the emetic a potion is to be given, composed of oil of almonds, syrup of marshmallows, and Kermes' mineral; 4, the diet is to consist of nothing but linseed tea, or something equally bland and unheating. I see no chance of this practice being fairly tried, without entrusting the first emetic to the constant attendants of the lying-in patients, giving them a strict charge to send immediately afterwards to the practitioners. Those who have criticised this mode of treatment have been dissatisfied by the circumstance, that the disease was extinguished so completely in embryo, that it was impossible to be certain what it was; but this is



a feeble objection contrasted with the fact, that every patient so attacked died of the disease before the remedy was employed, but after its employment every patient so attacked, and so treated, recovered.

III. The power of mercury as a remedy for inflammation has been so clearly made out in inflammation of the eye, the liver, and the pericardium, and not only its power, but the inadequacy of blood-letting to overcome inflammation in these organs without the aid of this remedy, that it deserves a fair trial in peritoneal fevers. I have never given it systematically in a number of cases, but what experience I have is in its favour. In the Westminster Lying-in Hospital, when ten or twenty grains of calomel used to be given every day, with purgatives, the gums sometimes were affected, and these patients invariably recovered. During the last winter it was tried in a few cases; when the gums became affected the patients recovered; but in others the disease was more rapid than the remedy, and the patients died without the mercury having affected them. The method of using it is to give two grains of calomel every two hours, until the gums become sore, or without this effect, until there is evidence that the circulation is drawn from the peritoneum to other surfaces, especially the bowels, the kidneys, and the skin; and this is attended by a subsidence of the disease, indicated by a diminution in the frequency of the pulse, a cessation of the pain, and the patient being able to turn in bed, and bear pressure. During the use of the calomel, opium generally requires to be used at longer intervals, as five or ten grains of the compound powder of ipecacuanha once in four hours. The symptoms which call for its use are severe pain, profuse purging, or a sinking in the general circulation. When the gums are sore, or the disease has yielded, the calomel should not be withdrawn suddenly, but given at longer intervals, or in smaller doses, and so gradually withdrawn. This is the way in which it has been used successfully by Dr. Farre.

IV. There is a class of cases attended by pain and tenderness of the abdomen, with a rapid pulse, which does not require bleeding, which does not bear it to the extent to which it is necessary in the inflammatory peritoneal fevers, and which is speedily and effectually cured by opiates internally, with hot poultices to the belly, aperients, and sometimes leeches. There is reason to believe that this form of the disease is present when the patient in her ordinary health is delicate and nervous—when the pain and tenderness have followed

any irritating cause, such as severe after-pains, or a griping-purge—when the pulse, although quick, is perfectly soft, and even weak, and this opinion is strengthened if blood has been drawn without relief, and without the signs of inflammation on its surface. The best way of treating these cases is to wash out the large bowels by a very large glyster, to give ten grains of compound powder of ipecacuanha every three hours, till the pain is gone, to keep the abdomen constantly covered with a warm linseed-meal poultice, and after the pain has ceased, if the abdomen continues sore and the pulse quick, to apply leeches, and give a mild purge. When I doubt the nature of the case, I apply leeches at the beginning.

V. Although I have been unsuccessful in the use of turpentine in peritoneal fevers, the testimony of competent witnesses convinces me that there is a class, or perhaps a stage of these fevers, in which oil of turpentine given internally is sometimes highly efficacious, and that cases apparently hopeless have been recovered by it. I would advise the reader to consult those who have been successful with it for the mode of giving it. There are two questions: one about the stage of the disease at which it is proper, the other about the dose, and whether a single or several doses. On these important points I leave the reader to consult those who have used it successfully.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE DISORDERS OF THE MIND IN LYING-IN WOMEN.

IN the year 1819 I wrote a paper on puerperal insanity, which the College of Physicians did me the honour to publish in the sixth volume of their 'Transactions.' Since then ten years have elapsed, during which I have seen more of the disease than I had before; and although in revising my paper at this distance of time, and comparing my subsequent experience with my former statements, I can see no great errors to correct, yet I find some obscurities which require to be explained, some opinions which deserve to be enforced, and much additional information which I think worth communicating. I have, therefore, written almost a new paper on the subject, retaining out of the former only the cases, and those views which I still entertain, and which I am unable to state more explicitly. My object is chiefly to relate my own experience of this disease, to describe what I have seen of its progress, how I have observed it to be affected by remedies, and what I have thought about its nature. If my statements of fact are different from those of other writers, I can only say that I have observed with as much care, and related what I have observed with as much accuracy as I could. As to my reasonings, they must take their chance.

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During that long process, or rather succession of processes, in which the sexual organs of the human female are employed in forming, lodging, expelling, and lastly feeding the offspring, there is no time at which the mind may not become disordered; but there are two periods at which this is chiefly liable to occur, the one soon after delivery, when the body is sustaining the effects of labour, the other several months afterwards, when the body is sustaining the effects of nursing.

I have repeatedly seen the commencement of mania and of melancholia in women who were in child-bed, or who had recovered



from their delivery, and were nursing. I will give a specimen of each rather than a general description. Such descriptions are commonly formed of a bewildering multiplicity of circumstances which never occurred together in one and the same instance, so that they are pictures which resemble nothing in nature, like the abstract ideas of the old metaphysicians.

A lady, who, I was told, had had a 'brain fever' after her former lying-in, came to London to be attended by me in her next confinement, and took a furnished house in a street near Cavendish-square. She had a short and easy labour, a good supply of milk, nursed her child, and continued to do well for so many days, that her friends concluded all danger was over; nevertheless, from the circumstances of her former confinement, I visited her twice a day, but I detected nothing which indicated the approach of disease; her pulse was not quick, her nights were disturbed only by occasionally suckling the child, and her manner and appearance were unaltered. On the tenth day after her delivery, the shop of a piano-forte maker in Oxford-street caught fire; this occasioned a great bustle in the neighbourhood; but as her sitting-room did not look into the street, it was kept from her knowledge during the day, but in the evening, while she was standing at her window, which looked into a yard at the back of the house, a piece of burning matter fell within her sight; I saw her about two hours afterwards, at nine in the evening; she was not herself; her manner was agitated; on being questioned about her feelings she kept silent for some time, and then answered abruptly; her pulse was quick, and her look and manner odd and unnatural. I slept in the house. At four o'clock in the morning the nurse waked me, and said that her mistress had had no sleep; that she was sitting up in bed talking to herself, but that instant had expressed a wish to see me. I rose and went to her; there was only a rush-light in a remote part of the chamber; as soon as she saw who I was she told me to sit down and look at her: I said, 'I do.' 'What do you see?' 'Nothing but yourself.' 'Look at my head.' 'I do.' 'Do you see nothing particular there?' 'Nothing.' 'Then I was presumptuous. I thought that a glorious light came to my temples, and shone about my head. I thought 'I was the Virgin Mary!' It is curious that the immediate cause of the disturbance was a lighted body, and that the first hallucination was concerned about light. She was put under the care of a nurse accustomed to such patients, and an eminent physician saw

her with me. Her pulse was soft, and never very quick, and her face pale; nevertheless, from a fear of congestion in the brain, her head was shaved, and ten ounces of blood were extracted from the scalp by cupping-glasses, without diminishing in the slightest degree her violence and incoherence; her conjunctiva was yellow, her tongue furred, and her bowels costive; hence she was moderately purged, and about three weeks from the commencement of the illness she returned to her country seat well. She was confined again about fifteen months afterwards, without any recurrence of the disease; about a week before this latter delivery she had the jaundice, of which she was cured by calomel and aloetic purgatives, before she fell in labour. It is practically important to notice, that she had the jaundice at the time of her first confinement, and became maniacal; that she had a slight degree of it during her second confinement, and suffered the same disease; that she was completely jaundiced before her third confinement; that it was removed by purgatives before labour, and that she this time escaped her mental derangement.

In this case the disease appears to have been excited by sudden agitation, and therefore came on suddenly; in other cases, in which no such cause occurred, and the disease arose spontaneously, its approach was more gradual, several or even many days elapsing, during which nothing more was observed than a pulse rather quick, restless nights, and a something quick and peculiar in the patient's manner.

## II.

One of my patients, almost from the day of her delivery, was observed to have restless nights, a quick pulse, and an irritable temper, compared with her natural one. She scolded the nurse about the merest trifles; one minute sent for the child to suckle, and the next ordered it angrily to be taken away. She would superintend her housekeeping, though she was entreated not to do it, and sent for the cook up into her chamber several times a day to inquire into the consumption of the family, and to give directions about its regulation. She talked almost incessantly, with disproportionate earnestness, and complained that her husband was not attentive to her; at length she accused him of incredible things, and soon after became so violent as to require confinement. Her passions of mind were all violent, not of a gloomy character. Her friends were kept



away from her; she never saw any body but her nurses and her medical attendants; she had a rapid pulse, much above 100, but she was not blooded, and she recovered in little more than a month.

I have repeatedly seen the commencement of mental derangement in women who had recovered from their confinement, and had been suckling several months. Nearly all these cases were instances, not of mania, but of melancholia. They occurred in women who had been debilitated by nursing. The disease at this period has been attributed to weaning; but in all the cases I have seen, the disease has begun before the weaning, and this measure has been resorted to because the patient had neither milk nor strength to fit her for a nurse. There was a peculiarity about the commencement of the disease which I have never or seldom noticed at the commencement of mania. There was an incipient stage in which the mind was wrong, yet right enough to recognise that it was wrong.

### III.

A pale, delicate lady, nursing an infant four months old, told me that she scarcely knew what was the matter with her: her sight was so impaired that she could not read; her powers of attention were so much impaired that her household accounts were burthensome to her; that she often rang for the footman, and when he came she had forgotten what she had rang for. She said she had a good husband, sweet children, ample property, everything to make her happy, yet she felt no interest in life. She added, that if this went on thus, she should lose her senses. She had lost flesh, and had little milk. After a short time she took it into her head that she had a fatal disease, and I was called out of my bed several nights to see her die. She told me that I was quite mistaken about her case; that she was sure she was dying, and that if I would sit down for five minutes I should see her expire. She next began to accuse her friends, especially her husband, whom she charged with infidelity, and an intention to poison her; and it became necessary to separate her from her family, and place her in that state of seclusion and control usually employed under such circumstances. She continued in this state many months, but ultimately recovered, and has had a child since without a recurrence of the disease.

I shall not attempt to give an account of the symptoms and progress of mania and melancholia in women who are lying-in and nursing, partly because the cases which I have related, and shall



have occasion to relate in the progress of this paper, will give a more faithful picture of the aspect and symptoms of these diseases than any vague general description, and partly because there is nothing peculiar in them. If a physician was taken into the chamber of a patient whose mind had become disordered from lying-in or nursing, he could not tell by the mere condition of her mind that the disease had originated in these causes. I do not mean to represent the disease as strictly uniform—cases sometimes occur under a peculiar form, but these are not the rule, but the exceptions. Thus I have seen it strikingly similar to that form of disease called delirium tremens, one instance of which I shall have occasion to relate, and in the following case catalepsy occurred in the progress of the disease.

#### IV.

Mrs. — is twenty-nine years of age; she has long been unusually subject to the common forms of hysteria; I have seen her after being strongly excited in conversation sink down insensible, and a few minutes afterwards recover with choking and sobbing; her husband tells me that he has often seen her whilst sitting at the dinner-table become apparently insensible, with her eyes open, still sitting up, continue in this state several minutes, and then come to herself again, but totally unconscious of what had taken place in the interval. She married nine years ago, has been pregnant many times, but has only borne one living child; every other time she has either miscarried during the early months, or, what was more common, the child has died without any obvious cause, about the sixth or seventh month, and premature labour has come on a week or two afterwards. A few days after her last delivery, of a dead child, at the seventh month (a circumstance which was attributed to some domestic agitation), she was seized with a violent head and face-ache, which was confined to the left side, and which subsided under the use of hemlock, but she continued to suffer flatulence of stomach, had a quick, weak pulse, and was much depressed in spirits; one evening she told her husband that she had never discharged the duties of a wife as she ought to do, and that her death would be a happy release both to him and her; the next morning she made an unsuccessful attempt to cut her throat. I now saw her in consultation with Dr. Sutherland; she was put under the care of a

regular attendant, and was at times so violent that it was necessary to confine her with a waistcoat.

A few days after our first visit we were summoned to observe a remarkable change in her symptoms; the attendants said she was dying, or in a trance; she was lying in bed motionless, and apparently senseless; it had been said that the pupils were dilated and motionless, and some apprehensions of effusion on the brain had been entertained, but on coming to examine them closely, it was found that they readily contracted when the light fell upon them; her eyes were open, but no rising of the chest, no movement of the nostril, no appearance of respiration could be seen; the only signs of life were her warmth and pulse; the latter was, as we had hitherto observed it, weak, and about 120; her fæces and urine were voided in bed.

The trunk of the body was now lifted so as to form rather an obtuse angle with the limbs (a most uncomfortable posture), and there left with nothing to support it; there she continued sitting while we were asking questions and conversing, so that many minutes must have passed.

One arm was now raised, then the other, and where they were left, there they remained; it was now a curious sight to see her, sitting up in bed, her eyes open, staring lifelessly, her arms outstretched, yet without any visible sign of animation; she was very thin and pallid, and looked like a corpse that had been propped up, and had stiffened in this attitude. We now took her out of bed, placed her upright, and endeavoured to rouse her by calling loudly in her ears, but in vain; she stood up, but as inanimate as a statue; the slightest push put her off her balance; no exertion was made to regain it; she would have fallen if I had not caught her.

She went into this state three several times: the first time it lasted fourteen hours, the second time twelve hours, and the third time nine hours, with waking intervals of two days after the first fit, and one day after the second. After this the disease resumed the ordinary form of melancholia, and three months from the time of her delivery she was well enough to resume her domestic duties.\*

In giving an opinion about the probable result of any case there are two questions—the one whether there is any danger to life, the

\* Dr. Sutherland, with whom I attended this case, related to me several others, similar, but far more extraordinary for the time which they lasted. One was a young lady who continued in this state for several months, and was preserved only by great vigilance and management in feeding her.

other, if the patient lives, how long is the disease likely to continue, and what chance is there of its becoming permanent and incurable. With regard to the first of these questions, I remember the time when it was the prevalent belief among medical men—not, it is true, those who had paid peculiar attention to the subject, but men of great general eminence—that they were diseases which were never fatal. Whilst I was attending the near relation of one of the most eminent and experienced of the provincial practitioners of this island, a letter arrived from him, begging the family to have no fears, that he had seen many such cases during his long life, and never saw one die; and even the late Dr. Baillie, when consulted about a case, remarked, ‘that the question was not whether she was to get well, ‘but when she was to get well.’ The latter patient died within a week after this prognosis. There can be no doubt that a very large proportion of cases of disordered mind in lying-in women and nurses ultimately recover, but it is equally certain that some of them die, and there are two modes of calculating the probability of death in any individual case: the one is to ascertain the proportion of deaths to recoveries in as large a number of cases as possible; the other is to endeavour to discover some symptoms, the absence or presence of which indicates safety or danger. As to the former of these modes, it is very difficult to procure trustworthy information. M. Esquirol, of Paris, has given an account of ninety-two patients in the Salpêtrière who had become deranged whilst lying-in or nursing. Of these, six died, that is, one in fifteen; but this estimate must give the mortality in chronic cases rather than recent ones. Dr. Burrows has published a table of fifty-seven cases, of which ten died; this is a mortality of more than one in six. The best mode of forming an estimate of the mortality of this disease would be to procure statements from a great number of practitioners, extensively employed in the practice of midwifery, of how many cases of puerperal insanity they had met with in their practice, and of these how many had died. This would be the best mode, although none but those who have tried to procure information in this way can have a notion of the difficulty of procuring answers scrupulously accurate. But however accurate the estimate may be, it must afford a very loose prognosis for any particular case. To a question about the probable fate of a patient, it would be a vague answer to say that the mortality is as one in fifteen. It would be more like the opinion of the actuary of an insurance office than of a practical physician. The



question would naturally occur, are there no symptoms in this as in other diseases by which to judge whether or no the life of the patient is in danger? Now, on this question, there is a passage in the manuscript copies of Dr. William Hunter's Lectures, so much more valuable than any remark in any printed book upon the subject, that I shall introduce it here.

'Mania,' says Dr. Hunter, 'is not an uncommon appearance in the course of the month, but of that species from which they generally recover. *When out of their senses, attended with fever like paraphrenitis, they will in all probability die*; but when without fever it is not fatal, though it (*i. e.* fever) generally takes place before they get well. I have had several private patients, and have been called in where a great number of stimulating medicines and blisters have been administered; but they have gone on as at another time, talking nonsense till the disease has gone off, and they have become sensible. It is a species of madness they generally recover from, but I know of nothing of any singular service in it.'

Making allowance for the loose language of extemporaneous lectures, and allowance also for some inaccuracy in the notes of these lectures, and putting together this statement of Dr. Hunter, with my own experience, I extract from it the following meaning: that there are two forms of puerperal mania, the one attended by fever, or at least the most important part of it, a rapid pulse; the other accompanied by a very moderate disturbance of the circulation: that the latter cases, which are by far the most numerous, recover; that the former generally die. This agrees closely with my own experience. Cases VIII, IX, X, which terminated fatally, were all attended by a very rapid pulse. None of those with a slow or only moderately excited pulse died. Some which were attended with a quick pulse recovered; but none of these were treated for paraphrenitis.

One evening, several years ago, a surgeon called on me, wishing me to return with him many miles into the county, to see his wife, who had become maniacal a few days after her delivery. I was at that time attending a lady in her first labour, whom I could not leave, but I offered to go with him if he would wait till the labour was over. It was going on wearily, there was no prospect of its being over before the morning, and as he was anxious to return home, he took another physician whom I recommended. Before leaving me, however, he said he should like to talk with me

about the case. I took down a volume of Dr. William Hunter's manuscript lectures, and showed him the passage which I have quoted above. He said he was sorry to read it, for that his wife's pulse was very rapid. About a week afterwards I heard that she was dead.

There are some other circumstances to be taken into the account of the prognosis: the form of the derangement, and the period at which it occurs. Mania soon after delivery is more dangerous to life than melancholia beginning several months afterwards. Nights passed in sleep, a pulse slower and firmer, even though the mind continues disordered, promise safety to life. On the contrary, incessant sleeplessness, a quick, weak, fluttering pulse, and all the symptoms of increasing exhaustion, portend a fatal termination, even though the condition of mind may be apparently improved. In the cases which I have seen terminate fatally, the patient has died with symptoms of exhaustion, not with those of oppressed brain, excepting only one case.

But supposing the patient to live, how long will the disease last? and what danger is there of its becoming permanent? Experience shows that mania is a less durable disease than melancholia; it is more dangerous to life, but less dangerous to reason. The best answers to these questions, however, would be a knowledge of the results of a vast number of cases. Unfortunately we have no such documents taken under satisfactory circumstances. The records of hospitals contain an account of cases which have been admitted, only because they were unusually permanent: they are the picked obstinate cases, and can afford no notion of the average duration of the cases of all kinds; the cases of short duration, which last only a few days, or a few weeks, which form a large proportion, are totally lost in the estimate of a lunatic hospital. Of the ninety-two cases mentioned by M. Esquirol, only fifty-five recovered, and six died, leaving thirty-one as the number of incurables, that is, one in three. Of those which recovered thirty-eight did so in less than six months. Dr. Haslam says, that of eighty-five admitted into Bedlam only fifty recovered, leaving thirty-five as the number of the incurable; of Dr. Burrows' fifty-seven cases only thirty-five recovered, eleven remained uncured; of the thirty-five which recovered twenty-eight did so in little less than six months. I am persuaded, however, that these tables throw little light upon the question, and present a prospect unnecessarily gloomy and discouraging. Of the many patients about whom I have been consulted, I know only two who



are still after many years disordered in mind, and of these one had already been so before her marriage.

Before leaving this part of the subject, there is still another question which requires to be thought of, and that is, whether a patient who has been disordered in mind after one lying-in, is likely to be so after another? I believe the chances are much against it; there is a sufficient possibility of such an event to call for the utmost degree of care not only in the next, but all subsequent confinements; but this care being taken, the proportion of cases in which the disease occurs twice is small. I have attended many patients who came to town to be confined because they had been deranged after their former lying-in in the country, and, excepting Case No. I, not one of these patients had a return of their disease.

I come now to consider the causes of puerperal insanity, that is, what occasions it to arise; and when arisen, in what it consists mentally and corporeally. Of the cases which I have seen, a large proportion have occurred in patients in whose families disordered mind have already appeared. The patients too were of susceptible dispositions, nervous, remarkable for an unusual degree of that peculiarity of nerve and of mind, which distinguishes the female from the male constitution. In some instances they had been long under the influence of depressing passions, or were suddenly assailed by some cause of mental agitation; but in many, no such circumstances had occurred, they had lately been delivered, or they were nursing, and that was all; scarcely any of them had ever been deranged before, or were ever deranged on any other occasion than on this. There is, therefore, something in the state of the constitution induced by lying-in or nursing capable of producing the disease in predisposed constitutions. What is this something? In my former paper on this subject, I endeavoured to express it by saying '*that peculiar state of the sexual system, which occurs after delivery.*' This has been noticed as an unsatisfactory explanation, and when I read it now, ten years after it was written, I am willing to confess that it was not sufficiently explicit. What I meant was this, the sexual system in women is a set of organs which are in action only during half the natural life of the individual, and even during this half they are in action only at intervals. During these intervals of action they diffuse an unusual excitement throughout the nervous system; witness the hysteric affections of puberty, the nervous susceptibility which occurs during every menstrual period,



the nervous affections of breeding, and the nervous susceptibility of lying-in women. I do not mean that these appearances are to be observed in every instance of puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, and child-bed, but that they occur sufficiently often to show that these states are liable to produce these conditions of the nervous system. Dr. Marshall Hall thinks, that the susceptibility of the puerperal state is to be explained by mere exhaustion, and does not at all depend on the influence of anything specific in the condition of the sexual organs at that time; but would an equal or a greater degree of exhaustion at any other time occasion the disease?—this is a question of fact, which I should answer in the negative. I have seen patients who have been deranged in child-bed, and who had recovered, at a future period much more exhausted by illness, and much more agitated in mind, without the slightest appearance of mental derangement.

Among the causes of this disease, there are two others which require notice—the one a disordered state of the organs of digestion, the other weaning. As to the first, it was very manifest in some cases, in others less so. Mental derangement is said to be often produced by weaning, that is, by the sudden suppression of the secretion of milk. I have no right to deny the experience of others, but my own would never have led me to such a conclusion. Among the fashionable women of this town nothing is so common as not to nurse their children; the milk comes in about one or two days after delivery, and the breasts become as hard as stones, but not a drop is extracted; and sometimes by cold-spirit lotions constantly applied to the breasts, sometimes by embrocations of oil and brandy, sometimes by poultices (according to the whim of the nurse, the patient, or the medical attendant), with gentle aperients, the milk is suppressed in a few days. I must have known this done in more than a hundred instances during the first week after delivery, a time much more liable to disordered mind than a later period, and in not one did it occasion puerperal insanity. In all the cases which I have seen months after delivery, the weaning has been the consequence of the disease, not the disease the consequence of the weaning. The patients had been reduced in health by nursing, their memories had become enfeebled, their spirits depressed, and their minds ultimately disordered; and they were directed to wean their children because they had neither milk nor strength to enable them to nurse.

But whatever may be the causes which excite these diseases, the most important question still remains to be considered—what is that

morbid state of organization on which the disorder of the mind depends? this is the proper object of medical art. We have no power by medicinal agents of relieving a disordered mind, excepting indirectly through the disorder of the body with which it is connected. It is impossible, therefore, to stir one step in the treatment of the disease without first ascertaining what this disorder is; or if different in different cases, what they are, how to discriminate them, and whether experience shows that one is more common than the other.

There is a strong disposition, not only popular but professional, to attribute raving of the mind to inflammation of the brain. Perhaps it originates in this—that the disorder of the mind with which we are most familiar is drunkenness, which is known to be caused by spirits, and to be cured by temperance. Mania is called brain-fever, and the sight of a raving patient instantly suggests the thought of cupping-glasses, iced-caps, low diet, and purgatives. This view of mania is, when it occurs in child-bed, still further corroborated by the popular notions about lying-in women. If a woman becomes deranged in child-bed, it is said not only that she has a brain-fever, but that the milk has flown to her brain, hence the term *mania lactea*. Dr. Denman says, that in his time it was a prevalent notion among the people, but an obsolete one in our profession, and formerly it was usual to attempt relieving the disease by restoring the milk and the lochia. It would be as good pathology to attribute puerperal fever to a suppression of the milk, and as good practice to attempt to cure it by drawing the breasts, fomenting the pelvis, or using any other local means for restoring these secretions.

But experience and reflection lead to very different conclusions; they teach us that a disorder of the mind may be connected with very opposite states of the circulation, sometimes with inflammation or active congestion, for which depletion is the shortest and surest remedy; sometimes with an opposite condition of the circulation, which depletion will only aggravate.

Cerebral excitement does not necessarily depend on inflammation or congestion; nor is depletion, however moderate, necessarily the proper remedy. Cerebral excitement is often aggravated by depletion; and in some cases, as I shall have occasion to relate, absolutely brought on by it. Now the question, what is the morbid state of organization on which puerperal insanity depends, must be

determined in the usual way. There is only one safe mode of working the problem, by observing the causes which brought on the disease, the bodily symptoms which accompany it, the way in which it is affected by remedies, and the morbid appearances discovered after death. These points can be learned only by an attentive and thoughtful observation of cases, and will be best communicated by the relation of them.

## V.

I went down twice to ———, — miles from London, to see a lady who had become deranged a few days after her delivery: her labour had been attended by an alarming hæmorrhage. She was sitting up in her easy chair, looking first to one side then to the other, talking incoherently, and would not, or could not, answer questions; but she was not violent, and required only the gentlest restraint. Her face and even lips were colourless, and her pulse small and quick. The circumstances under which the disease had come on precluded all thought of depletion. Nothing more was done than to prevent constipation by the mildest aperients, to soothe her, and support her with nutriment without stimulants. She slowly regained her health, and with it the faculties of her mind. I give this case chiefly to show that mania may occur in that bloodless state of the body which uterine hæmorrhage so often occasions.

## VI.

A lady in good health was delivered after an easy labour of her eighth child, but the placenta adhered, and was separated by the hand. The after-pains were severe and long-continued; opiates diminished their violence, but the intervals between them became shorter, till at length, on the second day, she was found to have permanent pain and tenderness in the hypogastrium, with a small, sharp pulse of 116, the lochia ceased, and she had a slight shivering. A very eminent physician was now consulted, and it was recognised and treated as a case of inflammation of the uterus. For three days bloodletting, general and local, was employed with considerable activity, yet on the third evening her state was unsatisfactory. She still complained of uneasiness in the uterus, and could not bear to have it pressed, but she was so much reduced both in strength and pulse that her physicians feared another bleeding. Another opinion, therefore, was requested, and the result of this consultation



was that she should be blooded again to faintness. The patient's head was placed low; the fifth tea-cup was nearly full before she complained of faintness; the first cups buffed, the latter did not. I slept in the house. When I left her at one in the morning, she was still rather faint. At four o'clock the nurse waked me to say that her mistress 'was much changed,' and she thought was dying. I found her cold and clammy, with a thread-like pulse, and pale, sharp features; her mind too rambled a little. I mixed some wine and hot water, gave it her by spoonfuls, and in about an hour, her skin being warmer, and her pulse more distinct, I directed a spoonful to be given every fifteen minutes for another hour, and then went and laid down again. When her medical attendants mustered at breakfast-time, she was so far recovered that they could scarcely believe what I told them of her state during the night. The pain and tenderness of the uterus were gone, and they were much satisfied with the result of the bleeding. In the afternoon, however, a hurried message was sent off for her medical attendants. I arrived first, and found her sitting up in bed, talking incessantly and incoherently, and now and then expressing a wish that she could hold her tongue. She was in a profuse warm sweat, and her pulse was much above 140. I again mixed some wine and water (I had better have given her an opiate), but after getting down about a wine-glassful of this diluted wine by spoonfuls, I found that both her tongue and pulse became slower. Her physicians now one after another arrived. Towards the evening she was much calmer, but obviously not herself in mind. The next morning every one recognised puerperal mania. In this state she continued several weeks, during which it was often necessary to put on the strait waistcoat, in order to keep her in bed. In less than a month she was convalescent from her mania, and for a week or two it was supposed that she was out of danger; but now her abdomen began to swell, and she died dropsical in the eleventh week after delivery. The body was not opened. Here was mania depending on what is called cerebral excitement, which leads most practitioners to employ cupping, cold, low diet, and purging, coming on in a state in which the circulating system was reduced to the lowest ebb.

## VII.

I was sent for late one night to see a lady who had been delivered of her first child about a week before. She was constitutionally

nervous—her milk had been deficient, and she had had slight fever, for which she had lived unusually low; but nothing had occurred to create the smallest anxiety about her till this evening, when her husband, who had left her as well as usual in the morning, came home and found her incoherent in mind. When I went into the chamber and approached her bed-side, I found her lying with her cheek on the pillow, her eye apparently fixed intently on some object. She paid no attention to the questions that were put to her, and could not be prevailed on to speak whilst I was in the room. She was in a profuse perspiration, which stood in large drops upon her face and forehead—her pulse was 140, small and weak. Whilst I was feeling it, her hand was affected by spasmodic twitches, and she picked at the bed-clothes, as if endeavouring to take up something which she saw there. What was the cause or nature of these symptoms? It was impossible to look at them without alarm. Was it the last scene of some eventful disease which had been stealing on unsuspectedly, or was it a sudden attack of puerperal mania? Although the mind was incoherent, it did not exactly resemble the ordinary form of that disease; it was more like delirium tremens. After talking over the subject with two medical men, who were there, it was at length agreed, that all active treatment for the removal of supposed inflammation of the brain should be postponed at least for a few hours, and that we should try the effect of opium. Thirty drops of the sedative solution of opium were divided between two draughts—one was to be taken directly, and the other two hours afterwards, if she was not asleep. I went the next morning at nine o'clock, and found the two medical men, who were there the night before; they met me with cheerful countenances, and the agreeable sentence, 'she is quite well.' I then learnt the events of the night. The second draught had put her into a sound sleep, and she awoke in the morning with a calm, clear mind, and a pulse of 80. I went up into the chamber with one of the medical gentlemen. As soon as she saw us she began to talk incoherently, and her pulse rose nearly to 100. Suspecting that our presence was doing harm, we retreated into the drawing-room. When her husband came down, he told us that all this agitation had been produced by her perceiving a striking likeness between myself and her dead father, and between my medical companion, who was a florid, healthy-looking man, and a dead friend of hers. The agitation, however, subsided as soon as we left the chamber. She had no return of it, and recovered

from her confinement without another untoward circumstance. Depletion would easily have converted this into a dangerous and perhaps a fatal case.

## VIII.

Mrs. — was delivered of her first child after a natural labour, attended, however, by rather more than the usual loss of blood. From the first her manner appears to have been excited and unnatural. Her nights became restless, her mind more excited, and about three weeks after her delivery she became maniacal. Her pulse was 140 before any active remedy was employed. She was put upon low diet, leeches were applied to the head, and she was freely purged with calomel and castor oil. The symptoms not abating, and the patient becoming very violent, a cupper was sent for, who took ten ounces of blood from the head by cupping-glasses, and the following morning I saw her for the first time. She was sitting up in bed in a strait waistcoat. Whatever was asked her she did not answer, but repeated it like an echo, 'Have you any headache?'—'Have you any headache?' 'Put out your tongue'—'Put out your tongue'—she would not say anything else. Her tongue was moist and pale—her pulse was between 120 and 130, small and weak—her bowels had been lately freely moved—her skin was not hot, her face was very pale—she had had no sleep for many nights. This being the state of things, I thought it a great object to procure repose. She therefore took twenty minims of the sedative solution of opium, and ten minims in a two-ounce glyster every six hours. This procured six hours of interrupted sleep, and when awake she was more herself. Some symptoms led her attendant to employ another bleeding by ten leeches to the head, which was shaved, and a blister applied to the crown. When I saw her two days after my first visit, she had had in the night several hours of sleep, and was so much better in mind that her friends were surprised when I told them that she was not out of danger. Her face was very pale, and her pulse so quick, small, feeble, and fluttering, that I remarked to her medical attendants that she would not bear the loss of another ounce of blood. It was agreed that she should continue her small opiate glysters, and that care should be taken to supply her with sufficient nutriment; but the next day the symptoms of exhaustion became more alarming, and when one of her medical attendants visited her in the evening he found her pale, cold, breathing only at long intervals, and with



scarcely any pulse—she died that night. The body was opened the next day by two very experienced anatomists. The veins throughout the body were remarkably empty—the heart contained little blood—the lungs and liver were singularly pale. Within the head there was the same deficiency of blood in the veins of the pia mater, and in the sinuses—under the arachnoid membrane was a little serum. On slicing off the hemispheres the bloody points were unusually numerous.

### IX.

I had no concern in the treatment of the following case, but being in the house where it was, to see another patient, I was taken by her medical attendants into her chamber, where I found her sitting up in bed in a strait waistcoat, with a flushed cheek, a dull eye, and occasionally uttering unintelligible words; her pulse was much above 100, but I did not count it, and her attendants remarked that it was getting hard. She did not look at all like a person within six hours of her death, so that I was much surprised to hear that she died that evening after being bled to faintness, which took place when she had lost about eight ounces. I received the following account of the case from those who attended her.

E. B—, twenty-three years of age, was delivered of her first child on the 30th December. On the evening of the day of her delivery she had a rigor, succeeded by heat of skin, and constant pain at the lower part of the abdomen, increased by pressure. The pulse was 130, and weak. An injection was given, a large poultice was applied over the belly, and she took ten grains of the compound powder of ipecacuanha. Her bowels were opened by the injection; she slept well during the night, and the next morning, the 31st, the pain was gone, but the soreness remained. The next day, 1st January, she complained of tightness of the head, her tongue was furred, her skin hot, her pulse 120, and weak; her bowels had been moved several times the day before. She now took five grains of calomel, her head was shaved, and six leeches were applied. At two o'clock on the same day she was visited again; her eyes were bright, her face was flushed, her skin hot. She spoke indistinctly, and her mind rambled; her pulse, which in the morning was weak, was now thought to be getting hard, and she was ordered to be bled from the arm till she fainted. Two grains of calomel were ordered to be taken every two hours. She was bled at three o'clock in the after-

noon. As the blood flowed, the pulse became so quick it could not be counted; hence, when she had lost eight ounces, it was stopped, although she did not feel faint. At six o'clock, when the attendant went to give her the calomel, she had scarcely any pulse. At eleven in the evening the pulse could not be felt. She looked deadly pale, the crassamentum of the blood was flat and red, with little serum; her mind wandered, but she knew her mother and relatives, who stood at the bed-side. Attempts were made to revive her by cordials, but she sank rapidly, had a cadaverous smell, a cold skin, and died at four in the morning. The body was examined eleven hours after death. In the abdomen the viscera were healthy, the peritoneum also; the external and internal surface of the uterus, as also its substance, were examined, and found natural. There was about half a pint of reddish fluid in the peritoneum. In the head the sinuses were thought to be rather more loaded than natural, the dura and pia mater rather thicker than usual; there was no unusual effusion anywhere. The plexus choroides appeared unusually pale; the substance of the brain was firm, and on slicing it no bloody points appeared.

#### X.

The following case I have alluded to in my paper in the College 'Transactions.' The patient, while in labour of her first child, was seized with puerperal convulsions. She was immediately delivered by perforating the head, and was blooded as largely as is customary in this disease. The convulsions ceased, she came to herself again, and seemed for a few days to be doing well; yet her pulse from the first continued quick, and a few days after her delivery she became maniacal. This was the case which I have mentioned in a former part of this paper, and about which Dr. Baillie stated that 'the question was, not whether she was to get well, but when she was to get well.' She died three days after the attack. The body was carefully examined by a very eminent anatomist, but no vestige of disease was discovered either in the brain or elsewhere.

What inferences are we to draw from the foregoing cases relative to the question for the solution of which I have related them, namely, what is the morbid condition of organization on which puerperal insanity depends? Let the reader reflect on the leading points of these cases. In No. I the disease occurred in a pale lady, without any heat of skin, or much quickness of pulse, and was not



relieved by the loss of blood. In No. III it occurred in one whose constitution was drained and enfeebled by nursing. In No. IV it occurred in a pale woman, habitually hysterical, subject to bear dead children from want of power to afford them life for nine months. In No. V it occurred in one who had been drained by flooding. In No. VI in one in whom, for urgent reasons, the circulation had been reduced to the lowest ebb consistent with life. In No. VII in one who had been living very low for a week, with such marked symptoms of the irritation of debility, that at first sight I thought it was the close of some disease that had been overlooked. It was speedily relieved, not by cupping and purging, but by the tranquilizing and sustaining power of opium. In No. VIII the disease was treated, though with all possible prudence and moderation, as an inflammatory state of the brain, by leeches, cupping, purging, and low diet; yet the patient died, not with symptoms of oppressed brain, but with those of exhaustion, and on examining the body the whole venous system was found extraordinarily empty of blood. In No. X the patient fell, as if shot, under the stroke of the lancet; and on examining the head there was found no effusion, and empty blood-vessels. In No. XI the disease came on after puerperal convulsions, a disease generally but not always depending on cerebral congestion, and after one of those enormous bleedings commonly practised in these cases, and no morbid appearances were discovered after death in the brain.

These cases, if fair specimens of puerperal insanity, lead straight to the conclusion, that the disease is not one of congestion or inflammation, but one of excitement without power. I shall be asked, are not these picked cases, selected to prove a point, and forming a small proportion to those of another character? Their very number gives the negative to this suspicion: ten cases can never form a small proportion of the experience of one individual, however extensive his opportunities of seeing the disease may be; for puerperal insanity is not like fever, a disease in which an experienced physician counts his cases by hundreds. Dr. William Hunter said, that in the course of his practice he had met with about twenty or thirty. There can be no mistake, unless, by some extraordinary accident, all my cases have been exceptions to the general rule—an incredible supposition! It is true I have related those in which the nature of the disease was most distinctly marked, in which the truths I am endeavouring to explain were most legible; but in most of the remainder there



was nothing to contradict these conclusions. It was the same form of disease, only less marked and striking. They surely prove that those cases of puerperal mania which are attended by a very rapid pulse, which Dr. William Hunter said generally die, and which he attributed to paraphrenitis, do not depend on this state of the brain, which requires depletion, but on a more exhausting excitation of the nervous system, which requires soothing and sustaining treatment.\* But I shall be told of the fluid under the tunica arachnoides, and the unusual number of bloody points in the centrum ovale, in Case IX. Are we, then, to shut our eyes to the symptoms during life, to the effect produced by remedies, to the mode in which death came on, that is, with symptoms of exhaustion, and to the remark-

\* I cannot refrain from extracting the following passage, notwithstanding its length, from the works of that sagacious observer and master in the treatment of disease, our own Sydenham :

‘There is a peculiar kind of madness, which sometimes follows upon inveterate ‘intermittents, especially quartans; and yields not to the ordinary method of cure, ‘but, after copious evacuations, degenerates into a lamentable kind of folly for life. ‘I have often been surprised to find no mention made of this disorder by practical ‘writers, as I have frequently met with it; and whereas the other kinds of madness ‘usually yield to plentiful bleeding and purging, this will bear neither: for when the ‘patient is almost recovered, if a glyster only of milk and sugar be given, it imme- ‘diately returns; and if repeated bleeding and purging be used, these evacuations ‘may indeed abate the violence of the disease, but will certainly render the patient ‘an idiot, and quite incurable. Nor will this seem strange, if it be considered that ‘the other kinds of madness proceed from the too great spirituousness and richness ‘of the blood, whereas this arises from its depressed state and vapidness, as I may ‘term it, occasioned by the long fermentation carried on by the fever, whence the ‘spirits become utterly unable to perform the animal functions. I treat this disorder ‘in the following manner: I give a large dose of some strong cordial three times a ‘day; for instance, of Venice treacle, the electuary of the egg, the Countess of ‘Kent’s powder, Sir Walter Rawleigh’s powder, or the like, dissolved in plague or ‘treacle water, or any other cordial water. Cordials may also be given in other ‘forms. During the course of the cure, a slender but restorative diet, and generous ‘liquors, must likewise be used; and the patient should keep her room, and lie ‘much in bed. This regimen may occasion a costiveness, whence a fever may be ‘apprehended, especially from the use of these heating medicines; but there is, in ‘reality, no danger of it, because the spirits are so far wasted by the preceding dis- ‘ease as not to be able to raise a new fever. In a few weeks the disorder will abate ‘by degrees, and then the cordials may be omitted for a few days; but the restora- ‘tive method of living must be continued, and the cordials repeated, after a short ‘interval, and persisted in till the perfect recovery of the patient. This method has ‘sometimes cured a madness that did not succeed intermittents, particularly in cold ‘and weak constitutions. I was called, last year, to Salisbury, to consult with my ‘friend Dr. Thomas, for a lady who was greatly disordered in her senses, and she ‘was recovered by it, though she was then in her pregnancy.’—pp. 66, 67.

able emptiness of the veins throughout the belly; and because there was a little serum under the tunica arachnoides, and more bloody points than usual in the medullary substance of the brain, conclude that it was a disease of congestion or inflammation, and that perhaps the patient died because she was not blooded sufficiently? There will be some, perhaps many, who will draw this inference. To my mind, this is one of the cases in which observation of the disease throws more light on its morbid anatomy, than its morbid anatomy on the nature of the disease; the living symptoms illustrate the dead morbid appearances, better than the dead morbid appearances do the living symptoms. To make the examination of dead bodies conclusively instructive, it requires to be done by those who possess two requisites: an eye familiar with the difference between natural and morbid appearances, and a mind capable of interpreting the hieroglyphic characters left by disease. These qualifications are never found, except in those who are, or at least have been, for a considerable portion of their lives continually employed in these examinations. A man whose experience in morbid anatomy amounts to five or six examinations in the year, is neither a competent witness of appearances, nor a competent judge of their meaning. To understand what these appearances mean, it is necessary to know the history of the case during life, the symptoms by which it was attended, and the way in which it was affected by remedies. Those pathologists who consider increased vascularity of the brain, and an effusion of fluid, however slight, as infallible signs that congestion or inflammation existed during life, and that depletion was the essential remedy, will do well to read Dr. Kelly's paper 'On the Pathology of the Brain,' and Dr. P. M. Latham's 'Account of the Epidemic at the Milbank Penitentiary.'

The essay of Dr. Kelly, which describes the appearances discovered in dissecting animals bled to death, is well known: it proves that when the general circulation has been drained to death, the vessels of the brain are still full of blood; but a far more instructive experiment was made a few years ago, at the Penitentiary at Milbank, of course with no evil intentions, and no suspicion of danger, not on sheep and dogs, but on men and women. The Penitentiary stands on a spot made for the production of malaria, a swamp below the level of the river, which runs within a hundred yards of the prison. The prisoners were, with what object and for what reason does not appear, suddenly put upon a diet from which animal food

was almost entirely excluded. An ox's head, which weighs 8 lbs., was made into peas soup for 100 people, which allows  $1\frac{1}{4}$  ounce of meat to each person. After they had been living on this food for some time, they lost their colour, flesh, and strength, and could not do as much work as formerly. The men could not grind as much corn or pump as much water as they once could, and the women fainted at their work in the laundry. At length this simple debility of constitution was succeeded by various forms of disease—they had scurvy, dysentery, diarrhoea, low fever, and lastly affections of the brain and nervous system. To show the causes and nature of these diseases, it is necessary only to mention the striking fact, that while the prisoners who fed on this diet were growing weak and falling into disease, the officers of the prison, with their families and servants, who resided on the same spot, but lived well, entirely escaped; and the still more striking fact, that about twenty of the prisoners who were employed in the kitchen, and had an ample supply of meat and food, with two or three exceptions, continued healthy. The affections of the brain and nervous system which came on during this faded, wasted, weakened state of body, were headache, vertigo, delirium, convulsions, apoplexy, and even mania. When bleeding was tried, the patients fainted after losing five, four, or even fewer ounces of blood, and 'were not better, but perhaps worse.' Leeches to the temples were equally useless—in some cases these patients died very slowly, after the circulation had remained, for a day or two, almost though not quite extinct; yet, on examining their bodies after death, there was found increased vascularity of the brain and sometimes fluid between its membranes and in its ventricles.

But the reader will ask, is there no such disease as phrenitis in lying-in women? If I may judge from my own experience, phrenitis, that is, furious delirium from inflammation of the brain, is a rare disease in child-bed. It is true, inflammatory headaches are not uncommon, and these are occasionally attended by delirium; but these cases are very different in their aspect and progress to those which I have related in this paper; the patients have headache, vertigo, singing in the ears, a flushed cheek, and a quick pulse. In most of them there is no disorder of the mind whatever, and when there is, it follows and is the effect of the inflammatory state of the brain; and it is never equal in degree, nor similar in kind, to the disorder of the mind in mania and melancholia. It is



pain of the head, with fever, followed by delirium. To show the reader that I am not insensible to the existence of inflammatory diseases of the brain in child-bed, and that when I meet with them, I am ready to treat them actively, and to afford him a specimen of these cases, I will relate one.

## XII.

I was taken by a medical gentleman some miles from London, to see a lady who had been delivered about a week of her first child. She had looked forward to her confinement with a strong apprehension that she should die in it; but her labour, though severe, ended well, and she continued free from illness for several days. She was a plump and rather florid woman. She began to complain at first of a dull headache and thirst—this was succeeded by throbbing in the head and giddiness; her face was red, her skin hot, and her pulse quick. She was kept on low diet, and purged well with calomel and senna, but during the night before I saw her she had become somewhat delirious. At times she was herself, and answered questions clearly; at others her mind rambled about absent things and persons: this was the account I received from her medical attendant. I found her sitting up in bed with eight gorged leeches hanging from her temples; her cheek was red, and her pulse full, firm, and throbbing. She told me that her headache was so distressing that she should go out of her senses; that she believed she had already been so during the night. I told the surgeon that I thought local bloodletting was quite inadequate to this case; that it was in vain to empty the small blood-vessels of the brain, whilst the heart and large arteries were pumping it into them with so much rapidity and force, that nothing would do but reducing the violence of the general circulation; and I advised him to bleed her to syncope. He bled her from the arm in the recumbent posture—the sixth cup was full, and for want of another the blood had already begun to flow into the hand-basin before her pulse began to falter, and her face to blanch. On closing the vein and raising her head, she fainted completely—when she recovered she was still faint, and said that her headache was gone: the blood in the tea-cups was buffed and cupped in the highest degree. In the evening the headache returned a little; twelve leeches were applied, she took five grains of calomel at night, and a black dose in the morning; she passed a tranquil night, woke with no headache, and a clear mind;

and when I saw her the next day she was so well, I took leave of her. I saw her medical attendant about a fortnight afterwards, who told me that she had no return of her symptoms. In this case the bodily symptoms indicative of inflammatory affection of the brain were sufficient guides to depletion without any disorder of the mind.

These febrile headaches, whether attended by delirium or not, require great care and prompt depletion carried as far as is necessary to remove them. I have seen these symptoms, when neglected or treated inefficiently, end in one case in hemiplegia, in another case in hydrocephalus, in a third in furious delirium, speedily followed by coma and death. I had written these cases with an intention of inserting them, but they would lengthen this paper, already too long, and lead me too far out of my road.

From this digression on the inflammatory affections of the brain in child-bed, I return to the proper subject of this paper, puerperal insanity. The alimentary canal is generally disordered in its secretions—the symptoms which indicate this are a furred tongue, an offensive breath, and above all, dark and offensive stools. These symptoms exist in very different degrees in different cases; in some they are scarcely perceptible, in others they exist in a most remarkable degree; in these latter cases they seem to be the link on which the disease hangs, for as soon as they are removed the patient is well. Case No. I affords some illustration of this principle, but the following is a far more remarkable instance.

### XIII.

A lady, twenty-two years of age, clever, susceptible, and given to books, was confined with her first child at ———, ——— miles from town; she was anxious to nurse it, but several days passing with little appearance of milk, doubts began to be entertained whether she would be able; *she* thought that she would; her nurse and surgeon thought that she would not: this led to irritating discussions, her manner became sharp, quick, and unnatural, and at the end of a few days she was decidedly maniacal. I and another physician were now sent for: we found her in a strait waistcoat, incessantly talking or reciting poetry; her skin was hot, her pulse full and much above 100; her tongue covered with a dark, thick fur; her bowels were confined, and her stools excessively dark and offensive; she took a dose of calomel and jalap, followed by small doses of sulphate of magnesia; these produced a few evacuations,

but they were followed by no relief; she talked almost incessantly, scarcely ever slept, and was so violent it was impossible to keep her in bed without the strait waistcoat. Thus three days passed from our first consultation. The physician who attended with me, thinking the case would be protracted, withdrew, and I was directed to take Dr. Sutherland down with me. As the purgative had operated very moderately, and the tongue and stools were as unnatural as at first, he proposed a more active purge. The next morning, therefore, she took a strong dose of senna and salts, made still more active by the addition of tincture of jalap; after this had been taken about three hours it procured a very large evacuation, nearly black, and horribly offensive; this was, as usual, discharged into the bed without any notice on the part of the patient; it acted again an hour or two afterwards, but now the nurse, who was sitting by the bed-side, was surprised to see her turn round, and in a calm and natural manner request to be taken up, as her medicine was going to operate; her waistcoat was immediately loosened and she was taken out of bed, when she voided a stool of prodigious size, as dark and offensive as the first, and then walked back to her bed calm and collected: we saw her not many hours afterwards; her waistcoat was off, she was lying on her sofa perfectly tranquil, answered questions correctly, manifested no vestige of her complaint, excepting some strangeness in the expression of her countenance, and a timidity and abstinence from conversation which was not natural to her; she recovered rapidly and uninterruptedly.

It remains for me only to explain the method of treatment necessary for these diseases. In the cases which I have related, I have said so much about the remedies employed for their relief, and the effects these remedies produced, both beneficial and injurious, that I have little else to do than to collect the rules of conduct dictated by them, and put them in a compact and orderly shape.

I. The constant attendants on the patients ought to be those who will control her effectually but mildly, who will not irritate her, and will protect her from self-injury. These tasks are seldom well performed by her own servants and relatives.

If the disease last more than a few days, and threatens to be of considerable duration, her monthly nurse and own servants ought to be removed, and a nurse accustomed to the care of deranged persons placed in their stead. Such an attendant will have more control over the patient, and be more likely to protect her from self-injury.



She should never be left alone, and everything should be carefully removed with which self-injury can be effected; such as cutting-instruments, garters, handkerchiefs, towels. The windows of her chamber ought to be carefully secured. With regard to the removal of her husband and relations, this also will be a question if the disease threatens to be lasting; it is generally right. Interviews with relations and friends are commonly passed in increased emotion, remonstrance, altercation, and obviously do harm; large experience, also, is decidedly favorable to separation as a general rule, yet there may be exceptions which the intelligent practitioner will detect by observing the effect of intercourse. The husband ought never to be left alone with his deranged wife, for obvious reasons. I have known more than once a neglect of this rule produce consequences which left in the minds of those concerned a never-ending regret. On this subject a serious appeal ought to be made to the sense and feeling of the husband.

II. The next rule regards the diet of the patient. It ought never to be very low; the lowest ought to consist of nutritious and unheating fluids, such as equal parts of gruel and milk, or gruel and good veal broth, or milk alone; and of these a quart ought to be given in the twenty-four hours. If there is any heat or thirst, the broth had better be omitted; but the cases in which this diet requires to be reduced are few; it even sometimes requires to be mended. If the patient is pale, and the temperature of the skin lower than natural, it is useful to add to the above diet two ounces of wine daily, mixed with gruel. When the patient is in such a state of mind as not to ask for support, and even object to take any, a thoughtless nurse will allow hours, and even days, to pass with no other food than a cup of tea or water gruel, at long intervals—a neglect which I have known to be of serious consequences: but if the disease after many days continues unabated, a daily portion of solid meat may be necessary, and the rule for it is this: if there is nothing in the bodily symptoms, separate from the disorder of the mind, which forbids it, this state of the mind is no objection to, but rather an argument for it. Hospital patients are sometimes clearly benefited by a cup of caudle several times a day; but to them diffusible stimulants are more safe and necessary than to persons of temperate habits. After being long accustomed to a daily supply of gin, they come into a lying-in hospital, suffer pain, lose blood, live on water gruel, and take purgative medicines. If mania attacks them under these circumstances, a moderate quantity

of wine is sometimes strikingly beneficial. Thus I would manage the diet in mania which occurs soon after delivery; but when melancholia attacks a woman long after delivery, who has been drained and enfeebled by nursing, a nutritious, and even cordial diet is necessary in all cases. She should take meat every day, with about four ounces of wine. Cupping, low diet, and purging would confirm her disease, and perhaps convert it into idiotism. Lastly, if mania attack a woman after sudden weaning, so that there is reason to believe that the disorder of the mind has been caused by the sudden suppression of milk (a case very different to that which I have last described, and one which I have not witnessed), there would be reason to suspect an inflammatory affection of the brain; but this must be determined, and the treatment regulated, not by the disorder of the mind, but by the bodily symptoms which accompany it.

III. The third rule relates to the medicinal agents necessary in the treatment of these diseases. These are—1st. Such as reduce the force of the circulation, especially bloodletting. 2d. Such as evacuate gastric and intestinal impurities, and amend the secretions which flow into the alimentary canal, as emetics and purgatives. 3d. Such as give sleep during the night, and calmness during the day: these are the various narcotics. 4th. Such as sustain the vital powers, as tonics and stimulants. These are not all necessary in each case, but it is out of these a selection must be made adapted to the circumstances of each case. 1st. With regard to bloodletting, the chief means of reducing the force of the circulation, the result of my experience is, that in puerperal mania and melancholia, and also in those cases which more resemble delirium tremens, bloodletting is not only seldom or never necessary, but generally almost always pernicious. I do not say that cases never occur which require this remedy; no man's experience extends to all the possibilities of disease, but I never met with such cases; and I would lay down this rule for the employment of bloodletting—never to use it as a remedy for disorder in the mind, unless that disorder is accompanied by symptoms of congestion or inflammation of the brain, such as would lead to its employment though the mind was not disordered. Even here, however, great caution is necessary; local is safer than general bleeding. In Case X the head was hot, and the face red, and the pulse was said to have become somewhat hard, yet a bleeding of eight ounces was followed by extinction of the pulse within three

hours, and death in less than six. The only cases attended by a very quick pulse which I have seen recover, were those in which no blood was taken. In the really inflammatory diseases of the brain, bloodletting of course is essentially necessary; but these, I think, can never be mistaken for puerperal insanity; they are febrile headaches, more or less acute. Pain of the head, with fever, is a much better indication for blood-letting than disorder of the mind without these symptoms. 2nd. With regard to remedies which evacuate gastric and intestinal impurities, the activity with which these remedies are employed must depend on the distinctness with which these states are present. If the powers of the constitution are not low, and the gastric symptoms are very marked, namely, a foul tongue, an offensive breath, and a yellow eye, an emetic, not of antimony, but ipecacuanha, may be given. Vomiting has sometimes been followed by such signal success in the treatment of mania, that some eminent physicians have considered it the most efficient remedy; but where the face is pale, the skin cold, and the pulse quick and weak, I should fear the depressing influence of nausea and vomiting. When the stools are very unhealthy in colour and odour, one or two active purges ought to be given, and a moderate action in the bowels kept up by such purges as empty the alimentary canal without drawing fluid from the circulation, such as the compound aloetic pill, or the compound decoction of aloes. Where, however, the gastric symptoms are very slight, and the powers of the system much exhausted, active and prolonged purging is injurious; the utmost that is necessary and right is a dose of the aloetic pill, or decoction, sufficient to move the bowels plentifully once a day. 3d. The most valuable medicines in the treatment of puerperal mania are narcotics. If given at proper times and in proper doses, they often procure nights of better sleep, and days of greater tranquillity. This calmness is most likely to be followed by some clearing up of the disorder of the mind. These remedies produce these salutary effects much oftener in the mania of lying-in women than in mania occurring under other circumstances; for it is more uniformly a disease of nervous excitement and debility. If the head is hot, the cheek flushed, and the patient thirsty, they ought to be postponed; but if these symptoms have been removed, or are not present, sedatives ought to be given, and the most efficient first. After many days and nights passed in perpetual wakefulness, it is an urgent object to procure tranquil sleep. For this purpose, twenty minims of the



sedative solution of opium may be given at once, and repeated in two hours if the patient is not asleep; even a third dose may be given in two hours more, if the two first doses have failed, but the cases in which opium has been most successful have required at most two full doses. When sleep has once been procured, small doses, such as five or ten minims, should be given at intervals of six hours. If these small doses procure sleep by night, it is unnecessary to return to the larger doses, but these may be used occasionally when the smaller doses fail. Constipation must be prevented by a daily dose of the compound aloetic pill or decoction, or, if these fail, by the compound extract of colocynth, which is made more soluble and active by mixing it with one-third of soap. If the sedative solution of opium should produce any of the ill effects which this drug is known occasionally to produce, such as headache, foul tongue, sickness, heat of skin, it should be discontinued, and the milder narcotics tried, of which the best is hyoscyamus mixed with camphor; five grains of each may be given every six hours, but the night dose should be doubled. It may be dissolved in an ounce and a half of camphor mixture. When once opiates have attained their objects they should be withdrawn, not suddenly, but gradually, diminishing the dose, lengthening the interval, watching the effect of this abstraction of the remedy, mending the diet whilst withdrawing it, and returning to the old doses if the diminution of them occasions any unfavourable symptom. 4th. There are cases and times in which medicines which sustain the vital powers of the constitution are necessary and useful. When there is a total absence of febrile or inflammatory symptoms, when the face is pale, the skin cool, or even cold, and the pulse very weak, a scruple or half a drachm of the carbonate of ammonia, divided into four doses, may be given during the twenty-four hours. The time comes when opiates have been tried and are no longer necessary, or have failed; the disease threatens to set in for a length of time, and the great object of the physician is to support the patient through a long, wearing, exhausting disease. This is done best by supporting her appetite for food, and in these cases the mineral acids are of essential service. The English physicians, most eminent for the treatment of insanity, employ these medicines much under these circumstances; they may be given alone or with a light bitter, or even bark, three times a day.

IV. The last rule I have to mention relates to seclusion and control. There can be no doubt that it is generally necessary and useful

to separate the patient from all those persons who are sources of excitement of any kind. This, however, can be effected only in one of two ways—either in a separate house, or part of a house where the patient has no other associates but her nurses, or in a receptacle for the deranged, where she has no other associates than her nurses and persons similarly afflicted with herself. This is the only society she has, excepting the short and occasional visits of the physician. Thus the power of controlling her, even by force, is placed in the hands, not of enlightened and benevolent persons, but of uneducated menials. I do not know how it can be otherwise, though I wish it could; but I think such a charge ought never to be placed in such hands without the most vigilant scrutiny of its exercise. There may be cases, or there may come a time at which some interruption to this solitary life may be advisable. When the disease had lasted long, when the patient expresses a strong wish to see some near friend, when she entertains illusions which the sight of some one may efface, the admission of such a person is worth a trial.\* I shall be told, that when patients are mending, or have recovered, the most common cause of relapse is too early an introduction to friends, and too early a return home. When the patient is recovering, or has recovered, I do not recommend these measures. It is when the patient has not recovered, and is not recovering, that I advise them to be tried; when month after month passes without any amendment, and her mental delusions assume a shape accessible to moral impressions, then it is that I would advise an interview with a friend. To illustrate what I mean, I relate the following case: on its accuracy in every part the reader may rely. I offer it respectfully to the consideration of those physicians who undertake not only the medical management of the insane, but who receive them under their roofs. I may be told that this case was rare, and may never occur again. I do not believe in such rare cases—even *lusus naturæ* occur in sufficient numbers to require classing, and these unique cases are unique only because we are not watchful enough to detect their fellows.

\* 'It is my opinion that confinement is too indiscriminately recommended and persisted in.' \* \* \* \* 'In many instances an intercourse with the world has dispelled those hallucinations, which a protracted confinement in all probability would have added to, and confirmed. In its passive state, insanity has been often known, if the expression be allowable, to wear off, by permitting the patient to enjoy his liberty, and return to his usual occupation and industrious habits.'—*Haslam, on the Moral Management of Insane Persons*, pages 14 and 15.



## X.

A lady, twenty-eight years of age, of good constitution, but susceptible mind, became affected with melancholia a few months after her second lying-in: towards the end of her pregnancy a frightful incident had occurred to a near relation, which affected her so deeply that she often spent the night sleepless, sitting up in bed, thinking of her misfortune, and dreading that she should lose her reason after her confinement. Having nursed her child without feeding it for three or four months, with much unnecessary anxiety and exertion, she grew thin and weak, complained of sinking at the stomach and aching in the legs, and experienced so much confusion of mind, that she could not arrange her domestic accounts; she became low-spirited, she knew not why: she was advised to wean her child, took some light tonic and gentle laxative, and went down to the sea-side, but at the end of a month she returned home, having derived little benefit from her absence; her spirits became gradually more depressed, and it was impossible to persuade her that she had not some fatal disease: one day it was a cancer; another, inflammation in the bowels; and to such a height did her apprehensions rise, that her husband was often brought home by some alarming message, and found her with a solemn air, and, in a low whisper, giving directions to her servants whom she had assembled round her, what to say if she should expire before their master arrived. She now grew much worse; there was no longer any doubt about the nature of her complaint; she was seen by a physician of extensive experience in these diseases, and sent into the country: many weeks passed; sometimes she was better, sometimes worse, now accusing herself of the deepest depravity, and meditating schemes of self-destruction; then again, convinced of the absurdity of her notions, and struggling against the load which for a short time every day weighed on her heart. In this way many weeks passed; at length the disease came upon her with more violence than ever, and in her self-examination and condemnation she became quite ferocious.

She was now put under the care of an experienced attendant, separated entirely from her husband, children, and friends, placed in a neat cottage surrounded by agreeable country (it was the finest season of the year), and visited regularly by her physician.

For several weeks she manifested no improvement: sometimes she was occupied with one notion, sometimes with another, but they were always of the most gloomy description; at length it became



her firm belief that she was to be executed for her crimes in the most public and disgraceful way; every noise she heard was that of the workmen erecting the scaffold, every carriage the officers of justice assembling at the execution; but what affected her most deeply was, that her infamy had occasioned the disgrace and death of her children and husband, and that his spirit haunted her. As soon as the evening closed she would station herself at a window at the back of the cottage, and fix her eyes on a white post that could be seen through the dusk; this was the ghost of her husband: day and night he was whistling in her ears.

Several weeks passed in this way; the daily reports varied, but announced nothing happy; at length her husband became impatient and begged to have an interview with her, thinking that the best way to convince her he was not dead was to show himself; this was objected to: he was told the general fact, that patients are more likely to recover when completely separated from their friends, that if she saw him she would say it was not himself but his ghost; but the husband was obstinate, and an interview was consented to. When he arrived at the cottage, he was told that she had had a tolerable night, was rather more tranquil, but that there was no abatement of her gloomy notions. 'As soon as I entered the 'drawing-room, where she usually spent the day,' (I copy his own statement, which I have now before me, and which he wrote down at the time of the occurrence,) 'she ran into a corner, hid her face 'in her handkerchief, then turned round, looked me in the face, 'one moment appearing delighted at the thought that I was alive, 'but immediately afterwards assumed a hideous expression of countenance, and screamed out that I was dead and come to haunt her. 'This was exactly what Dr. ——— had anticipated, and for some 'minutes I thought all was lost.

'Finding that persuasion and argument only irritated and confirmed her in her belief, I desisted, and tried to draw off her attention to other subjects; it was some time since she had seen either 'me or her children; I put her arm under mine, took her into the 'garden, and began to relate what had occurred to me and them 'since we parted; this excited her attention, she soon became 'interested, and I entered with the utmost minuteness and circumstantiality into the affairs of the nursery, her home, and her friends. 'I now felt that I was gaining ground, and when I thought I had 'complete possession of her mind, I ventured to ask her in a joking

‘manner, whether I was not very communicative for a ghost; she laughed; I immediately drew her from the subject, and again engaged her attention with her children and friends. The plan succeeded beyond my hope; I dined, spent the evening with her, and left her at night perfectly herself again.’

He went the next morning, in a state of intense anxiety to know whether his success had been permanent, but her appearance at the window with a cheerful countenance soon relieved his apprehensions: while he was there Dr. ——— came in; he went upstairs without knowing the effect of the interview, and came down, saying, ‘It looks like magic!’ With a view of confirming her recovery, she was ordered to the sea-side to bathe; as soon as the day of her departure was fixed, she began to droop again, the evening before it she was very low, and on the morning of her setting off was as bad as ever; this state continued for several weeks, in spite of sea air and bathing, and ceased as suddenly as it had done before, apparently in consequence of interviews with friends, calculated to remove the apprehensions by which her mind was haunted. She has since then continued perfectly well, and has had another child without the slightest threatening of her former malady.

The conclusion which I deduce from the foregoing case is, not that violent mania is curable by conversation, (if it should occasion the irruption of relatives during the height of the disease, the communication may do more harm than good,) but there is a stage approaching convalescence, in which the bodily disease is loosening its hold over the mental faculties, and in which the latter are capable of being drawn out of the former by judicious appeals to the mind.

I know too well that striking cases give an inaccurate notion of the average influence of remedies to expect that similar conduct will often be followed by similar success, yet I would ask these questions: How long would this patient have remained in a disordered state of mind, if she had not been treated in this way? and again, how many persons are there at this time in a similar state, who (although those who have the care of them do not suspect it) are capable of being restored in a similar way to their natural views and feelings?

If the reader will attend, not only to the case itself, but to the remark which follows it, he will not attribute to me any disposition to deny the efficacy of seclusion and control in ordinary cases, and in the active states of the disease.

## THOUGHTS ON INSANITY AS AN OBJECT OF MORAL SCIENCE.

It is a popular belief that insanity is a disease not in our physical but our moral constitution. This is not a speculation merely, but leads to various practical conclusions: that it is a subject rather for metaphysical than for medical inquiry; that a physician is requisite for a madhouse only as he is for a school or a prison; that the true theory of these mysterious diseases will be found in some extraordinary obliquities of thought, the true cure in some moral regimen, some training system for the weak or crooked faculties of the understanding.\*

There are many diseases in which some of the faculties of the mind in a certain degree deviate from their natural state: such are the incubus or nightmare; severe and habitual indigestion, so often attended by lassitude of mind and depression of spirits; the hypochondriasis of liver disease; the strange and different forms of hysteria; and lastly, but most remarkably, fever attended by delirium; no one supposes these to be moral diseases; no doubt is entertained that the mind is affected by disease of the body; the mental symptoms are universally considered as the natural effects and signs of disturbance in the brain; a man of plain sense, therefore, familiarly acquainted with these facts, would naturally look upon insanity in the same light, unless some solid reasons can be given him to the contrary; where are such reasons to be found?

I. One cause of the belief that insanity is a moral disease is, that it is often produced by passions or efforts of mind; as the cause and the ultimate effect are both mental, it has been thought that the

\* 'Of late, however, it has been seriously proposed in a great degree to remove both the medical treatment and moral management of insane persons from the care of physicians, and to transfer this important and responsible department of medicine into the hands of magistrates and senators.' 'Most persons who have not received a medical education have been fully persuaded they could arrange and compose it in its utmost state of distraction.'—*Haslam, on the Moral Management of Insane Persons*, pp. 2, 6.



disease must necessarily be a moral one. A very little observation, however, will teach us that no causes operate more distinctly upon our bodily organs than violent efforts and agitations of mind; will not terror so enfeeble the muscles as to make us as tired as after a toilsome walk? will not the anxiety of a few hours deprive us of appetite for the next meal? will not long-continued grief or intense study so impair the process of nutrition as to emaciate the body and bleach the cheek? will not mental agitation set the heart beating, the pulse throbbing, and crimson the countenance? Those states of mind which are capable of producing insanity, act distinctly upon the bodily organs; and if they are capable of disturbing the muscles, the stomach, the organs of nutrition, the heart and blood-vessels, even to the little blood-vessels of the cheek, with which the mind is only secondarily connected, where is the difficulty of supposing that they may act physically upon the brain, with which it is immediately connected? If mental effort or agitation induces physical disturbance in the brain, this physical disturbance will show itself by an unnatural state of the mind; thus the cause may be mental and the ultimate effect mental, yet the intermediate process itself may be essentially a physical one.

II. Another cause for the moral theory of insanity is, the supposition that the bodily disease which accompanies it is too slight to occasion the mental derangement; but this will no more bear examination than the former. For, first, the bodily disease which accompanies insanity may not be so striking as that which accompanies delirium; it may not be so noticeable as a hot skin, a quick pulse, a furred tongue, and helplessness of limbs, yet it may be equally, or even more capable of disturbing the actions of the brain. A little black bile, which none would notice but an explorer of hepatic secretions, may be more capable of disordering the faculties of the mind than loss of appetite and prostration of strength, which every one would notice. It is certain that puerperal insanity depends on a peculiar state of the bodily constitution, yet this state, so far from being obvious, is often known to exist only by a disordered condition of the mind. This objection is founded on the supposition that bodily disease is only capable of disturbing the brain of the patient in the same degree that it strikes the senses of an observer, which is a manifest absurdity. Besides, in the delirium of fever we consider that the deranged state of the mind is the effect of a disordered state of the brain; why then should not the same symptoms

prove the same thing though unconnected with the same extent of disease?

III. It is well known that strange habits of mind, long continued, are capable of generating great singularity of opinion and feeling; between this moral eccentricity and insanity there is sometimes a striking resemblance. It is not easy to confound boisterous madness with healthy singularity, but when a lunatic is harmless in conduct, insane only on one point, and talks so rationally on all others that it is not easy to detect his infirmity, his state of mind is wonderfully like those eccentric and absurd opinions which intellectual habits are capable of producing, and which often cause their possessors to be called mad, half in joke yet half in earnest: a little insight into the mode of their production will enable us to judge whether this resemblance is apparent or real.

It is so well known that the mind may brood over a subject till it loses the power of seeing it in a right point of view, that it is commonly said a man may tell a lie till he believes it. 'I wish,' says Dr. Johnson, rebuking Boswell for the zeal into which he had worked himself about the history of Corsica, 'I wish there were some cure like the lover's leap for all heads of which some single idea has obtained an unreasonable and irregular possession.' Objects which have had frequent access to the mind, seem to have a double power over it: viz., they not only produce the natural effect of a single application, but they revive the traces or recollections of their former impressions. This is the case not only with objects of fancy, but with propositions which appeal to the understanding; an opinion produces effect partly in proportion to the manifest proof which it contains, and partly to the frequency with which it has been so presented to the mind as to excite the feeling of approval or conviction; every time it is so applied it leaves (if I may so express myself) a stratum of belief in the mind, this is capable of incalculable accumulation, till at length the object produces an effect and gains a power over the individual totally different to what it possesses over one less frequently impressed by it. Objects by repetition lose their power over the senses, for the senses have no memory, while they incalculably augment it over the understanding and the affections. It is on this principle that so many trifles acquire an influence over us so disproportionate to their importance; that with the generality of mankind opinions owe their power more to habit than to evidence; that an old song, however bad, pleases more than a new one, however good;

that a wag tickles those who are accustomed to him more than those who are not; that the ploughman prefers his coarse and awkward mistress to the loveliest lady in the land; that the constant dropping of daily circumstances on the character wear in it deeper channels than the transient torrents of persuasion.

It is this striking similarity between the erroneous opinions of the insane, and the singular opinions of the eccentric, and this power of habit to generate, even in healthy minds, something so similar to the essential features of insanity, which has been, I suspect, one of the principal causes for the belief in the moral nature of this disease. Yet any one who is familiar with human nature, both sane and insane, would perceive an important difference between the two cases: it is this, that the errors of the eccentric are the result of long habits, continued for a great part of their lives, and fabricated by slow and almost imperceptible degrees, while the errors of the insane spring up suddenly, within a few months or even weeks. The patient has suffered some mental agitation, received a blow on the head, has been lying-in, or is recovering from a fever; the mind becomes confused and hurried, and in a few weeks, or even days, there arise the wildest and most absurd beliefs. In these cases there is neither time nor peculiarity of habits adequate to explain such effects by the intellectual processes above alluded to. Between the erroneous opinions of the insane and the singular opinions of the eccentric, there is the same difference as there is between that permanent readiness of argument, imagery, and language, which is the result of study and practice, and those sudden and temporary gusts of eloquence produced by a bottle of wine.

IV. It is possible that the reader may be satisfied about the foregoing points, yet there remains another consideration which may induce him to believe that insanity is at least sometimes a moral disease: the consideration is this, that the cure of insanity is sometimes effected by a method both moral in its nature and moral in its operation; thus patients have been relieved from their hallucinations, and restored at once to complete sanity, by a well-contrived incident, a well-expressed argument, or a well-managed conversation. Here the cure is as much an intellectual process as the conviction of a sophist, or the conversion of an infidel; in fact, they are identical processes. Now I would first remind the reader of the general truth of the opposite statement, the total inefficacy of argument, persuasion, and all appeals to the mind during the violence of the disease; but



granting it to the full extent of the truth, do we not witness the same effects brought about by the same means in affections whose origin is confessedly physical? If a person low-spirited from ill-health should suddenly receive some joyous news, he would for a time at least be restored to the hilarity of health; would forget his low-spirits in his bright prospects; the physical would yield to the mental impulse. A more striking example sometimes occurs in delirium; a person in the height of fever, who, if left to himself, would stare vacantly and talk incoherently, will sometimes at a loud question wake up, answer collectedly, be himself for a short time, and then relapse into his former incoherence. Here is a mental cause removing, by a mental operation, a state of mind avowedly physical. From such facts what are we to infer? Not that insanity is a moral disease, because it is sometimes benefited by moral treatment, but that though the unnatural state of the mind arises from a diseased condition of the body, there are times and states in which the mind begins to regain the capability of being acted upon in the natural way by its natural mental objects.

V. There is another circumstance which cannot be numbered among the *reasons* for the moral theory of insanity, but which I suspect has greatly contributed to it; I mean the fear that the opposite notion would favour the doctrine of the materiality of the soul. A moment's reflection, however, will show that the physical theory of insanity is not more likely to lead to this conclusion than the physical theory of delirium, which no one doubts. If the effect of bodily disease on the mental faculties is likely to have a dangerous influence, the danger is not in this or that instance, but in the principle. As the present question, however, is not what is the safest doctrine, but what is the truest; as the example of insanity adds nothing to the danger of the principle, and as this is not the place for discussing the question how far it is compatible with the immortality of the soul, I shall not enter into it. I may be allowed, however, to remark, that the whole danger rests on this proposition, that if the diseases of the body disorder the faculties of the mind, then the faculties of the mind must be the functions of the body. But where is the proof of this? Disease in the liver impairs digestion; is digestion a function of the liver? Defects in the cornea confuse the perceptions of the retina; is vision a function of the cornea? It is plain, therefore, that disease in a part may disorder actions which are not the functions of that part. The mind is affected

by the state of the stomach, of the liver, of the uterus; we know, therefore, that it may be affected by the state of organs with which it communicates, but of which no one pretends it is the function. It may be said that the mind and these organs can never be seen apart, and that although it is not supposed to belong to them in the same way as a function belongs to an organ, we have no proof that they can exist separately: true, but take another instance. A hand shattered by the bursting of a gun will produce fever and delirium; let the limb be removed at the proper period, the constitution regains its tranquillity, and the mind its powers: it is clear, therefore, that the mind may be affected by disease in a part not only of which it is not the function, but from which it may be separated; that such is the construction of the living body, that one thing may affect another with which it has only a temporary connexion; where, then, is the danger of the principle, that the diseases of the body disorder the faculties of the mind? Whoever has convinced himself by other considerations of the immortality of the soul, will find no difficulty in this principle; and so far from shrinking from it, will rather see in it a reason for believing that 'in a separate state of existence it is highly probable that the soul works clearer, and understands brighter, and discourses wiser, and rejoices louder, and loves nobler, and desires purer, and hopes stronger, than it can do here.'\*

It appears, therefore, that emotions of mind are capable of disturbing the organs of the body, and that, though moral causes in themselves, they may be physical in their operation; that the adequacy of bodily disease to disorder the mind is not to be estimated by the degree in which it strikes the attention of the observer; that although the erroneous opinions of the insane are very similar to the singular opinions of the eccentric, they are very different in their nature and origin; that causes, moral both in their nature and operation, are capable of influencing diseases which are avowedly physical, and that consequently their influence in insanity is no proof that it is a moral disease: lastly, that the physical theory of insanity is no more a proof of materialism than many avowed instances of the influence of body over mind. I conclude, therefore, that there is no ground for the reasons which have led to the belief in the moral nature of insanity; if we take into the account the influence of physical causes in its production, as injuries of the head, parturition, drunkenness, the sun's heat, and the influence of medicinal

\* Jeremy Taylor's sermon on the death of the Countess of Carberry.

remedies in abating or removing it, can we avoid taking it from the solitary and singular station which it holds as a moral affection, and replacing it among those in which an unnatural state of mind attends on bodily disease?

If this was merely a speculative question, an inactive scepticism might be philosophical and justifiable; but it is one of the many we meet with in life which cannot be answered with mathematical certainty, but which should be settled as well as we are able, because they are necessary for action. It is no less a question than whether, in our search after a better theory and a more successful treatment of these diseases, we shall occupy ourselves in investigating the causes and treatment of disease in the brain, or in discussing whether insensibility is an error of the perception, the imagination, or the judgment. In applying the inductive mode of reasoning to its intellectual phenomena—who are the persons best fitted for prosecuting the inquiry? those who are familiarly acquainted with the causes, progress, and treatment of diseases in general, and among them of the diseases of the brain, or those whose only qualifications for the task are their benevolence, their zeal, and their metaphysics?

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In considering insanity as an object of legal medicine, it often becomes a question, and sometimes a puzzling one, whether the peculiarity in the mind of the person who is the subject of investigation does, or does not, constitute unsoundness of mind? On these occasions, it is often said that the peculiarity is not madness, but eccentricity. To form a proper opinion on this question, it is necessary to have an accurate conception, not only of what we mean by the word insanity, but also of what we mean by the word eccentricity.

Now, the persons who have passed for eccentric, and whom I have had opportunities of observing, I would divide into three classes. 1st. Those who differ from the rest of mankind chiefly in their objects and pursuits. Instead of desiring and aiming at the common object of human wishes, namely, rising in life, the attainment of a competence, the acquisition of wealth and power, they are contented in these respects to remain stationary, and they dedicate the whole of their time and talent to the cultivation of their minds and the acquisition of knowledge. This peculiarity of pursuit, unless



counteracted by much intercourse with polished society, generates various peculiarities in their appearance, habits, manners, and modes of expression; they are careless, often slovenly in their dress, awkward in their manners, singular, and often pedantic in the topics and language of their conversation. Such persons are called eccentric, but their eccentricity consists only in their pursuits and manners; it is the simplest and most unquestionable form of eccentricity, and is compatible with the healthiest, happiest, and most vigorous state of mind. 2d. The second class consists of persons who differ from the rest of mankind in the singularity of their opinions. With the same materials they draw inferences widely different from those of sensible and competent judges; they are persons of great confidence in their own judgment, defective either in knowledge or in comprehensiveness of mind, and by separating those facts which are favourable to their opinions, by frequent meditation on them, and by keeping out of sight the opposite facts, they at length attain the firmest conviction of their peculiar notions. This process will sometimes carry a man a great way. There is at this time, in America, a Captain Symes, who is convinced that the earth is perforated from pole to pole, that the sea flows through, that the perforation is navigable, and he is said to be planning a voyage to explore it. This form of eccentricity, in a minor degree, is very common; the persons subject to it are often clever and zealous, but they never possess very superior minds; they have the zeal for knowledge without corresponding sagacity; still they are eccentric, not mad, for they arrive at their conclusions through an intellectual process, though a crooked one: it is a law of the human understanding, that a little evidence perpetually presented to the mind will produce as much conviction as a greater quantity presented rarely. 3d. There is still another class of persons who are called eccentric. Those whom I have had an opportunity of observing closely have been remarkable for a high opinion of themselves, quite disproportionate to their apparent powers or actual achievements, for rashness of conduct never corrected by experience; some of them have had singularly calm and sweet dispositions; others have been of stormy tempers, subject to violent gusts from trifling provocations; they have had singular opinions without any intelligible reasons for them, and have most of them had a peculiarly formal and solemn manner. After continuing many years in this state, and passing among their friends for eccentric characters, they have ultimately become de-

ranged. I need scarcely say that this peculiarity of mind, although constantly mistaken for eccentricity, is, in truth, slumbering, undeveloped madness. The signs which ought to create suspicion of this state are these: insanity being more or less prevalent in the family; a singularity of manners, opinions, and actions, inexplicable by the peculiar pursuits of the individual; enormous self-esteem; mischievous schemes obstinately persisted in, and uncorrected by experience.

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When the body is healthy and the mind sane, our beliefs, emotions, and actions, are produced by mental processes, more or less complete in different individuals, but still in all by mental processes. We believe such a proposition because we have some evidence for it, good or bad; we experience angry or sorrowful emotions, because something irritating or depressing has occurred to our minds; we inflict punishment upon another from a vindictive emotion excited by a real injury; but in madness, these beliefs, emotions, and actions, seem no longer to be the results of mental processes, but to be under the influence of a peculiar bodily state. I have conversed with those who have recovered from derangement on the subject of their delusions, and have asked them what could have led them so firmly to believe such absurdities or impossibilities, what real or imaginary reasons they had; and they have told me that they had no reasons at all, that there was the thought in their mind, accompanied by the most undoubting confidence of its truth, but how it came there they knew as little as how it went away. Persons on the verge of melancholia will often declare that they are wretched, they know not why; that they have everything to make them happy, and yet they feel no interest in life, a distaste for all their ordinary pursuits and pleasures, a wretchedness for which they can give no reason to themselves. In these extraordinary cases in which persons have committed murder on those who have never offended them, and towards whom they felt no antipathy, it seems that they were sometimes urged by some strange impulse totally different to the sense of injury, and thirst for revenge, which impels the sane man to commit such acts. If we are right in supposing that the instincts of animals consist of reasonable acts, not preceded by any reasoning process, but subservient to some bodily sensations in the animal, there would be a striking analogy between the two conditions, and insanity might

be said to be the temporary conversion of human into animal nature. This has long appeared to me to be the most reasonable conjecture on this dark and mysterious subject.

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It has been stated by legal authority, that, to make out insanity, it is necessary to prove 'insane belief.' But what is the definition of 'insane belief?' Is it the belief of something either physically impossible, or utterly groundless and unreasonable? If so, it will apply, indeed, to the greater number of hallucinations, but will not reach them all.

I knew a captain of an East Indiaman who became deranged during a lawsuit about his father's will, and who believed that he had come into possession of £100,000 a year; he spent money lavishly, drove about the streets in a carriage with a mistress, told me that he should restore the feudal system in all its glory, offered to give me a pair of carriage horses, and at length went abroad to dethrone the Grand Sultan, promising that if I went with him he would make me his Grand Vizier, and give me a magnificent seraglio. In this case the predominant notion was utterly groundless and unreasonable; but what shall we say to those cases in which the predominant notion is such, that it is more reasonable to believe it than to disbelieve it, or is an actual truth? yet such cases there are.

In religious melancholy the patient thinks that he is the object of Divine anger. In this case is the prominent belief utterly groundless and unreasonable? Christianity, as represented to us in the New Testament, clearly leads to the belief that only a small part of the human race is to be saved: consequently the chances are much against any particular individual, and I know few persons who have not reason to doubt whether they have ever attained that strength of faith, purity of heart, and entire repentance, which are held out as the necessary conditions of salvation. When we consider the certainty of death, and the magnitude of the question, it seems more reasonable to feel anxiety, and even terror about it, than indifference; yet experience shows that people, as long as they keep their sound senses, bear the thought with sufficient lightness for all the uses of this world. Dr. Johnson, who seldom touched any subject without lighting on the truth, perceived this, as appears by



the following opinion recorded by Boswell. ‘Madness frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind, by falling upon his knees, and saying his prayers in the street, or in any other unusual place. Now, although, rationally speaking, it is greater madness not to pray at all, than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid there are so many who do not pray, that their understanding is not called in question.’

Here the insanity consists, not in the groundlessness and unreasonableness of the predominant belief, but in its affecting the mind in a different way to what it does that of sane persons. I attended a deranged lady, whose predominant belief was, that her husband was unfaithful to her; the notion, so far from being unreasonable, was, I believe, true, and she had known it for many years without any unnatural disquietude, but now it engrossed all her thoughts; she neglected her ordinary pursuits, took a dislike to her friends, felt no interest about her children, and sat silent and motionless from morning to night. After continuing deranged several months, she recovered, although she still retained the same opinion. In what, then, consisted her insanity? not in the groundlessness and unreasonableness of the predominant belief, but in its withdrawing her attention from all other thoughts and pursuits, in its overwhelming influence over her feelings and conduct.

## CHAPTER III.

THE MODE OF DISTINGUISHING PREGNANCY FROM THE DISEASES  
WHICH RESEMBLE IT.

It is a common opinion, that the symptoms of pregnancy are so certain, that no one who is not either inattentive or ignorant can possibly mistake them; and whenever any error of this kind occurs, the person who has committed it is an object of ridicule: yet not only are women and their nurses often wrong, but so are practitioners of considerable experience; nay, even those who have paid especial attention to the subject, and who have the largest experience of obscure cases of this kind, are sometimes at a loss, and sometimes err. For want of clear notions of the subject, and a very attainable degree of tact, practitioners are frequently incurring disgrace, patients are subjected to active courses of medicine for the reduction of tumours, for which the natural remedy is parturition; and in some instances, pregnant women have been supposed to be dropsical, and actually tapped, to say nothing of other blunders.\* I know of no account of the subject at all adequate to its difficulty and importance;† and I think I shall be doing a service to a numerous class of practitioners by giving a full and connected account of the symp-

\* 'We saw at Paris, in the year 1666, a miserable example of this kind in a woman who was hanged and afterwards dissected publicly. She was found to be pregnant with a child of four months, notwithstanding the report of the persons who had visited her by order of the judge before her execution, who assured the judge that she was not so. What deceived them was that this woman had menstruated in some degree. This affair made so much noise at Paris, that it came to the knowledge of the King and all his court, by whom those persons were greatly blamed, who by their ignorance had been the cause of the rash execution of this poor unfortunate, with whom had perished her infant, which was innocent of the crimes of its mother. .... Besides the death of such innocent little creatures, they deprive them of eternal felicity by making them die in the belly of their mother without receiving the baptism which would have procured them so great a good.'—*Mauriceau sur les Maladies des Grosses Femmes*, 4to. 1721, tome i. liv. 1, pp. 71 and 72.

† The fullest account of the subject is contained in a German work, entitled 'Dr. Wilhelm Joseph Schmitt's Sammlung Zweifelhafter Schwangerschaftsfälle nebst einer kritischen Einleitung über die Methode des Untersuchs.' Vienna, 1818.

toms of pregnancy, the degree in which they may be relied on, the mode of distinguishing pregnancy from the cases which resemble it, and the various forms of disease to which it requires to be applied.

In learning the symptoms of pregnancy for the elucidation of doubtful cases, it is necessary to attend, not merely to the symptoms themselves, but to the order in which they succeed one another, and to the time of their appearance.

The first symptom of pregnancy is the omission of menstruation. The patient may have been pregnant a week or two already, but she cannot know it till that period of the month arrives when she is accustomed to menstruate; and then, when she expects to be unwell, she finds that she is not so. This is soon followed by sickness; it commonly occurs on rising in the morning, and diminishes, and at length ceases, as the day advances; it generally continues during the first half of pregnancy, and subsides about the time when the movements of the child begin to be felt. When three months have elapsed without menstruation, the abdomen begins to enlarge; this is at first very slight, the patient rather *feels* distended than *shows* any visible enlargement; but it gradually increases, so that after the fourth month the prominence of the abdomen can be perceived externally. By the fifth month this prominence is so considerable, that when the patient is standing, no one can overlook it, and from this time it gradually increases till it attains the well-known bulk of a person near her delivery: thus the visible enlargement of pregnancy does not last more than five months; if it has lasted nine, that alone is a reason for doubting whether it arises from pregnancy. The next symptoms are enlargement and shooting pains in the breasts, darkness of the areola, and enlargement of the follicles round the nipples. In women with dark eyes and hair, this discolouration is very distinct; in women with light hair and eyes, it is often so slight that it is difficult to tell whether it exists or no. The last symptom I have to mention is the most important, because, if really present, it is the most conclusive—I mean the child's movements. These begin to be felt when four months have passed without menstruation. At first the sensation is only slight; it is like a pulse or a fluttering in the abdomen, and lasts only a few seconds at a time; it may be felt one day and then cease for several; but gradually this sensation becomes stronger and more frequent, till at length, if a hand happens to be laid on the abdomen at the moment when the child moves, it can be felt externally. Towards



the end of pregnancy its movements are so strong, that whilst the patient is sitting, the heaving of the abdomen may sometimes be seen through her dress.

Thus, the ordinary signs of pregnancy are a cessation of menstruation, morning sickness, enlargement and shooting pains in the breasts, darkness of the areola, enlargement of the abdomen beginning about the third month, and gradually increasing till the ninth; the movements of the child after the fourth month gradually growing stronger till the ninth.

It is clear that if these symptoms always accompanied pregnancy, we should always know when it existed; and if they never accompanied any other state, we could never mistake any other state for pregnancy. But unfortunately they possess neither of these requisites for infallibility; they may be absent in patients who are pregnant, and present in those who are not so; and thus give occasion to frequent errors.

I. Many women assert that they have menstruated regularly during the early months of pregnancy: whether this is really menstruation, or a periodical hæmorrhage from partial separation of the ovum, is not the question, but whether, during the first months of pregnancy, there may not occur a monthly discharge of blood which in period and duration so far resembles menstruation, that the patient is unable to distinguish it; and about this there can be no doubt. As to sickness, there is an infinite variety in the degree in which it occurs in pregnancy: some patients are sick day and night, during all the nine months; others never feel the slightest nausea from the moment of conception to that of delivery. In thin women the enlargement of the breasts is often very slight; and in fat women the breast forms so small a proportion of the bosom, that any enlargement of the former is scarcely perceived. In very fair women, with light hair and eyes, the discolouration of the areola is often so slight, that it is difficult to perceive; and in brunettes who have already borne children, the areola remains dark ever afterwards, so that this ceases to be a guide in all subsequent pregnancies. The enlargement of the abdomen from the third month to delivery, is in all cases present and progressive whilst the fœtus is alive; but it may die, and yet be retained till the ninth month, in which case the enlargement will not be progressive. The same may be said of the movement of the fœtus; it will not move if not alive, and there are cases, though rare, in which it has not moved during

the whole of pregnancy, although it has been born alive and vigorous; of this I have known one instance, and read of others. Thus a woman may be pregnant though she seems to herself to continue to menstruate, has no sickness, or enlargement about the breasts, or darkness of the areola, or progressive enlargement of the abdomen, or perceptible movement of the fœtus. Such a complete assemblage of omissions, however, is not likely to meet in the same case.

II. A woman may have apparently all the symptoms of pregnancy, and yet not be pregnant; menstruation may be stopped by other causes; when it ceases suddenly in a woman of healthy constitution, who had previously menstruated with perfect regularity, it is a strong symptom, but there are women of feeble constitutions who, without being pregnant, frequently pass months without menstruating; in such a person the omission of menstruation proves nothing. Sickness may be produced by other causes besides pregnancy; and when it arises from a weakness of stomach, the morning is the time when it is most distressing. The bosom may enlarge because the patient is growing plump. Some have laid great stress on the darkness of the areola, thinking that no other state besides pregnancy is capable of producing it. I saw two young and newly-married women within two days, who had made preparations for lying-in, and who were not pregnant. In both, the areola was dark, though (if their history is to be trusted) they had never had children. I believe, however, that darkness of the areola rarely depends on other causes, and that when it exists it may generally be looked upon as a sign either that the patient is pregnant, or has been so formerly.\* The abdomen often

\* 'Obstructions and pregnancy are both accompanied by a stretching fulness in the breasts, but in the last only (pregnancy) may be perceived the areola or brown ring round the nipples, from which in the last months a thin serum distils; but this circle is not always so discernible as in the first pregnancy, and even then is uncertain as well as the others.'—(*Smellie*, vol. i., p. 187.)

'Dr. Hunter had great faith in this sign, insomuch that he asserted that he could always judge by it whether or not a woman was pregnant; he once evinced how much dependence was to be placed on it. A subject was brought to him for anatomical purposes, but on looking at the breast, from the appearance of the areola he declared that the female died while pregnant. One of his pupils examined the genitals, and found that she had a hymen; this seemed a contradiction, but the Doctor still adhered to his opinion, and thought more attention due to the former than the latter appearance. On opening the body his assertion proved just, for the uterus was found impregnated.'—(*Lowder, MS. Lectures*.)

'The areola, or brown circle round the nipples, has been represented as an indubitable mark of pregnancy. This is not, however, suspected to be a primary consequence of a particular affection of the uterus, but of the preceding enlargement and



enlarges from flatulence, dropsy, and other diseases, so as to equal or exceed the bulk of pregnancy. As to the movements of the child, it is very important to distinguish between these movements as felt internally by the patient, and as felt externally by a hand applied to the surface of the abdomen; the latter, if really felt, is an infallible sign of pregnancy, but the former are often felt when there is no child. Thus a woman may cease to menstruate, have sickness, enlargement of the bosom, and darkness of the areola, a progressive enlargement of the abdomen, and sensations which resemble those produced by the movements of the child, without being pregnant.

But if the ordinary symptoms of pregnancy are so far from being infallible, what, it will be asked, is the result in practice? It is this—that although they are sufficient guides in most cases, and under ordinary circumstances, yet that they are often insufficient. One person is pregnant who has no right to be so, and obstinately denies it; another is pregnant who has no cause to be ashamed of it, but from some peculiar circumstance, reasonable or unreasonable, disbelieves that she is so. One thinks that she is pregnant merely because she is sick, another because she is not regular, a third because her belly swells, and a fourth because she wishes to be so—and these erroneous denials and erroneous suspicions are imparted from the patient to the medical attendant, and influence his conduct. Of these errors some are the result of ignorance or thoughtlessness, but some are committed by men of sense, experience, and attention.

How then are we to act in doubtful cases? To wait till the doubtful state is sufficiently advanced to enable us to ascertain two points; 1st, whether the enlargement of the abdomen depends on enlargement of the uterus, and if so, 2d, whether the enlarged uterus contains a fœtus; these are the ultimate objects of what is called examination by touch; and the several indications which are sought for, are important only as they elucidate these two questions.

Those who have had most experience in obscure cases of this kind agree, that it is difficult to decide about them by touch during

\* alteration of the breasts; and though it generally occurs in pregnancy, it may be produced by any cause capable of giving to the breasts a state resembling that which they are in at the time of pregnancy, of which it can only be esteemed a doubtful sign. The areola is therefore found in many of the complaints which resemble pregnancy, and though generally, not universally, I think, in pregnant women.—(*Denman, Introd. to Midwifery*, vol. i, p. 251.)



the early months, and that the longer the examination is postponed, the more conclusive it is. Dr. William Hunter, who possessed at least more than the average quantity of experience and tact, used to express himself thus in his lectures on the subject: 'I find that I cannot determine at four months, I am afraid of myself at five months, but when six or seven months are over, I urge an examination.'

Having chosen the time for examination, the next question is, how to perform it? What are we to seek for, and how shall we detect them? Our object is to ascertain the state of the uterus, and this may be felt in two ways—externally through the walls of the abdomen, and internally through the vagina. In examining externally through the walls of the abdomen, the bladder should be empty, the patient in bed, *in* her night dress, *on* her back *in* a posture between sitting and lying, with the knees slightly drawn up. These are the most favourable circumstances for the external examination; but we are often obliged to examine without these advantages.

The first thing to notice is the situation, consistence, and figure of the tumour which is distending the abdomen. In pregnancy the uterus does not rise out of the pelvis before the third month—by the sixth it is up to the umbilicus—by the seventh it is a little above the umbilicus—by the eighth month it is half-way between the umbilicus and scrobiculus cordis—and in the ninth month it has reached the scrobiculus cordis, its highest elevation: thus, if we are examining a patient about the sixth month of pregnancy, we shall feel a circumscribed tumour occupying the front of the abdomen, from the brim of the pelvis to the umbilicus, of an oval form and firm consistency, much firmer than the abdomen above and on its sides, where it is occupied by the intestines. All this can be made out clearly if the walls of the abdomen are thin and relaxed; if they are fat, this is difficult, and often impossible; but even then we can notice whether the enlargement is firm or soft: the former will be the case if the patient is pregnant.

The next thing to notice is the umbilicus. In the unimpregnated state it is sunk below the surface, forming a shallow pit; but in pregnancy, when the uterus has arisen to or above the umbilicus, this part projects above the surface of the abdomen;\* this, however,

\* 'Those who are pregnant have the abdomen always much more eminent before, and the umbilicus much more elevated, than in false pregnancy; so that in a doubtful suspicion of pregnancy advanced four or five months, or more, if we find

depends on the period of pregnancy at which we are examining; it will scarcely be found before the sixth month, and the further the pregnancy is advanced the more distinct will it be. The firmness of the abdomen and the projection of the umbilicus depends on one and the same cause, that is, the firmness of the tumour which is distending the abdomen; but any other tumour equally firm may occasion both these symptoms; their presence alone proves little, but if the state which we are investigating is advanced as far as the seventh or eighth month, their absence proves a great deal; for if the umbilicus is depressed, and the abdomen, though enlarged, is soft and yielding, these alone prove that the patient is not pregnant. Let not the practitioner, however, give an opinion till he has collected all the proofs.

The next thing to attend to is, the movement of the child. If the hand is laid on the naked abdomen, between the pubis and the umbilicus, the fœtus will sometimes be felt to stir. As, however, it moves only occasionally, this may not happen during the examination. It is said,\* that by dipping the hand in cold water, and laying it suddenly on the naked abdomen, the fœtus may be made to move. As I have long had the cold hand of a dyspeptic sufferer, I have no occasion to dip my hand in cold water; it is always cold enough to make the patient shrink, and by laying it suddenly on the naked abdomen, I have sometimes felt the child move, but this has been only an occasional occurrence. If distinctly felt, it is of course the most conclusive symptom.

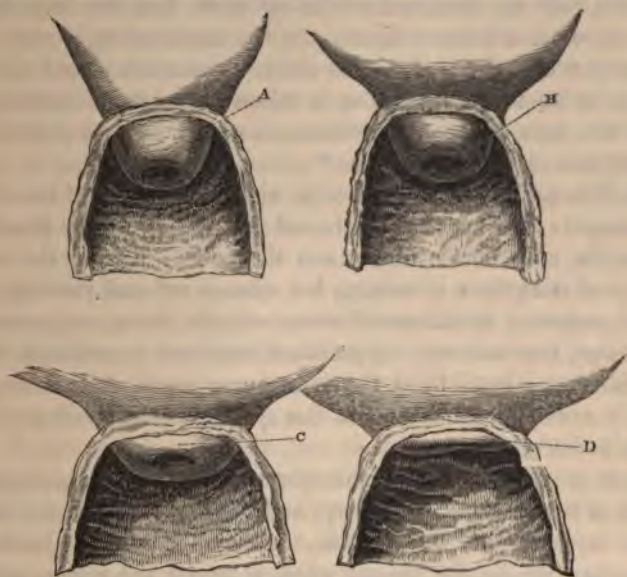
Having examined the uterus through the walls of the abdomen, we proceed next to examine it through the vagina: for this the patient should be turned on her side; and here again there are three things to observe, the state of its neck, the state of its body, and the movement or rather the mobility of the fœtus. 1st, in the unimpregnated state, the neck of the uterus projects into the vagina about two-thirds of an inch, like a thick, firm, fleshy nipple. At the termination of pregnancy, a few days before labour, this neck is completely obliterated, the portion of uterus, which lies over the top

‘ the navel of the woman sunk and the orifice of the womb small and hard, we may be assured by these two signs that she is not pregnant, for, in true pregnancy, advanced to the period which I have named, the navel appears always more raised, and the internal orifice more tumefied, supple, and soft, than in false pregnancy.’—(*Mauriceau*, t. i. p. 93.)

\* *Morgagni de Sed. et Causis*, Epist. 48. § 3.—*Dr. J. Hamilton*.



of the vagina, no longer projecting into its cavity, but forming a flat roof. This obliteration begins about the fifth month, the neck becoming gradually softer, broader, and shorter; by the seventh month it is much altered, and not at all like the neck in the unim-



- A the neck of the uterus before the fifth month, when it has undergone no change in its length.  
 B the neck at the sixth or seventh month, when it has begun to shorten.  
 C the neck in the eighth month, when it is nearly obliterated.  
 D the neck at the end of the ninth month, when it is quite obliterated.

pregnated state, being very soft, broad, and short. It is now calculated to have lost three-fourths of its length; but it is not quite obliterated till the last week of pregnancy, so that if a false alarm about labour, two or three weeks before delivery, gives the practitioner an opportunity of examining the uterus, he will find a soft, short nipple still remaining.

As the neck of the uterus remains unchanged till after the fifth month, it is a good reason for postponing examination till a later period;\* yet although this statement is generally correct, especially

\* 'It is generally impracticable to discover by a touch in the vagina, whether or not the uterus is impregnated, till after the fourth month.'—(*Smellie*, vol. i, p. 181.)

'The stretching of the uterus and upper part of the neck cannot be perceived till the



in first pregnancies, it has been stated far more strictly than is true. An anatomical teacher will show a preparation of a uterus in the fifth month of pregnancy, with an unshortened neck, and think the question settled by anatomical demonstration; but a uterus in a bottle is only one case, and proves no more than the examination of a uterus in a living subject; and the examination of many has taught me, that the neck of the uterus is as much altered in some women at the fourth month, as in others at the sixth, especially in those who have had several children, in whom the neck yields more readily than in first pregnancies.\*

2d. The next thing to observe is, whether the body of the uterus is enlarged: this may be ascertained by pressing up the finger between the neck of the uterus and the pubes: here in the unimpregnated state there is nothing but what is soft and yielding; but where pregnancy has advanced several months, this space is occupied by a large, firm tumour. A practised hand will immediately detect the difference; but I think the young practitioner finds more difficulty in satisfying himself about this symptom than about any other which is detected by touch.

There is a combination of the external and internal examinations, which in thin persons gives a very accurate knowledge of the nature of the tumour. For this purpose, the finger of the right hand is to be applied against the tumour which is felt in the vagina, and the left hand is to be applied on the outside of the abdomen, to the upper part of the circumscribed swelling. Now, by alternately pressing the tumour up, by means of the finger in the vagina, and down by means of the hand on the abdomen, the practitioner becomes certain that the tumour, which is felt through the walls of the abdomen, is the same as that which is felt through the vagina; the most satisfactory proof that it is an enlarged uterus. This method is applicable as early as the fourth or fifth month.

3d. In the pregnant uterus the fœtus floats in a bath of liquor

\* fifth, and sometimes the sixth month; and even then the uterus must be kept down by a strong pressure upon the belly.—*Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 183.) 'From that time it (the projecting part of the neck of the uterus) grows broad and soft by degrees till the sixth month or thereabouts; after which it begins to diminish in all its dimensions in proportion as the womb extends. So that when the woman approaches the end of pregnancy, it is quite flat, and confounded with the globe of the uterus.'—(*Mauriceau*, tome i. p. 97.)

\* 'The neck of the womb will in some be felt as long in the eighth as in others in the sixth or seventh month.'—(*Smellie*, vol. i. p. 185.)

amni. When the patient is in the upright posture, its head rests over the top of the vagina. If the practitioner applies his finger to the uterus just in front of the neck, and gives it a push, the foetus will float for an instant, and the next instant fall with perceptible weight on the point of the finger;\* this sensation, if once felt, can never be mistaken; it is scarcely inferior in conclusiveness to the muscular movements of the child, and has this advantage over the latter, that it can be felt whether the foetus is alive or dead. The patient ought to be placed almost in an upright position; the best period of pregnancy for detecting it is from the fifth to the seventh month—earlier the foetus is too light to be felt, and later it is often too closely packed to be moved.

Having described the mode of examination by which pregnancy may with certainty be known, and by which, consequently, it may be distinguished from the diseases which are often mistaken for it, it will be useful to consider the different kinds of cases about which the practitioner will be consulted, and to which he will find it necessary to apply this test.

I. Single women sometimes have the common symptoms of pregnancy, yet obstinately deny the possibility of their being so; this denial is generally so positive and apparently sincere, that the young practitioner is sure to be influenced by it, but experience will teach him to turn a deaf ear to it. It appears difficult to explain the obstinacy of assurances which those who make them know to be false; but I suspect they deny to the last that they *can* be pregnant, because they hope to the last that they *are not so*. Another circumstance likely to bias him is the respectability of the patient; but this, too, must be disregarded. Single women sometimes become pregnant in all ranks of life, not only among the low, but among the high; and not only among these, but in the middle ranks; and the practitioner, in his intercourse with the world, will often be placed in puzzling situations, and have to listen to very curious disclosures.

\* 'In the seventh month the head of the child is frequently felt resting against the lower part of the uterus, between the pubis and os internum; and being pushed upwards towards the fundus, sinks down again by its own gravity.'—*Smellie*, p. 188.) 'Sometimes the head is not felt till the eighth or ninth month, and in some few cases not till after the membranes are broken, when it is forced down by the contraction of the uterus and strong labour-pains. This circumstance may be owing to the head's resting above the basin, especially in a narrow pelvis.—(*Smellie*, p. 188.)

## I.

A genteel woman called on me one morning, and related to me the symptoms of her complaint, which were exactly those of pregnancy. She was healthy, had always menstruated regularly till seven months ago, when she suddenly ceased to do so, and about three months afterwards her abdomen began to enlarge. She was now about the ordinary size at the seventh month of pregnancy. As she had not told me whether she was married, I asked her whether it was possible for her to be pregnant? she said, 'certainly not,' for she was not married. I then asked her whether I should give her a mere conjecture about the nature of her symptoms, or whether it was important for her to know it with certainty. She said that she must not leave the house without knowing it with certainty. I then told her that there was only one way of determining it, which I explained. After a little agitation, she consented to an examination. I found the abdomen firm, the umbilicus prominent, the neck of the uterus nearly obliterated, its body enlarged, and I could make the fœtus float, and feel it fall heavily on the point of my finger. After a little pause, I told her, as inoffensively as I could, that she was not only pregnant, but not more than six or eight weeks from the time of her confinement; and I then repeated my question, 'is it possible?' She answered, she *thought* not. She then told me that she was privately married, that it was of the utmost importance it should be kept secret, and that her husband had assured her, and she was sure believed himself, that if he avoided injuring the hymen, it was impossible for her to become pregnant. Whilst examining by the vagina, I had noticed that this membrane was imperfectly torn. I never saw her again for several months, when one day she appeared among my morning patients; her size was gone, she was looking well, but she came to consult me about some nervous symptoms. I asked whether the opinion I had given her about her former state was correct; she said "quite," and that the certainty of it had induced her to make arrangements which had preserved her from discovery.

## II.

A few days after my first interview with this lady, another came to consult me about a tumour of the abdomen; she said that she had been seen by several surgeons, who pronounced it to be an enlarged ovary; but the last person she consulted (Mr. Copeland), suspecting something different, sent her to me. She was not only



pregnant, but from the complete obliteration of the neck of the uterus, I concluded that she was within a few days of her confinement. She told me that she was a widow, under the protection of a gentleman; and her reason for denying or disbelieving that she was pregnant was, that she had never had a family by her husband.

When, as in these cases, a healthy woman who had always menstruated with perfect regularity suddenly ceases to do so, and a few months afterwards has a progressive enlargement of the abdomen, there is the strongest reason to suspect her of pregnancy, whatever may be her station in life. But however strong this presumptive evidence, no prudent man will venture an opinion on it without testing that opinion by a careful examination by touch.

Not only are unmarried women often pregnant without its being believed, but the same is sometimes the case with married women. When, after many years of barren matrimony, they at length become pregnant, as sometimes happens, they conclude it to be disease; and even their medical men often adopt and act on this supposition, of which I could give numerous instances.

### III.

A woman came to me one morning with a note from a practitioner containing the following statement: her age was forty-two; she had been married twenty-two years without ever being pregnant. About seven months ago she had ceased to menstruate; a few months afterwards the abdomen began to enlarge, and was now nearly equal to that of full pregnancy. For several months her practitioner had been using various means for reducing the tumour, but in vain. She was too fat for me to detect any circumscribed tumour; but the enlargement of the abdomen was very firm, the umbilicus prominent, the neck of the uterus almost obliterated, its body enlarged, and the areola round the nipple was dark. I wrote an answer enumerating these symptoms, adding, that I concluded his patient was pregnant. About seven weeks afterwards she brought forth a child.

I met a physician and an apothecary in consultation about a married lady who had a circumscribed tumour of the abdomen, which was supposed to be an enlarged ovary, for the reduction of which various means had been employed. For many years she had ceased to bear children, and the tumour was inclined towards the right side. After learning these particulars from her medical

attendants, we went into her chamber and heard her own account. She had suddenly ceased to menstruate, and the swelling had begun to appear a few months afterwards. When I was alone with her physician and apothecary, I remarked that the question about what the tumour was, would be much narrowed by determining what it was not—that it was not pregnancy, and I advised them to allow an examination by touch; for this purpose she was undressed and put to bed. I found the tumour distinctly circumscribed, and sufficiently lateral in its position to justify the supposition that it was an ovary; it had not risen high enough to protrude the umbilicus, and I could feel no movement within; the neck of the uterus was soft, broad, and had lost two-thirds of its length; its body was enlarged and firm, and by placing her in a sitting posture, and thrusting the finger up against its anterior parts, I felt that I had displaced a moveable body, which the moment afterwards fell heavily on my finger. I communicated my conviction that she was pregnant to the physician and apothecary; and about three months afterwards she was delivered of a child.

A puzzling class of cases is that in which pregnancy really takes place, but after a time the *fœtus* dies and is still retained. Here some of the symptoms of pregnancy are present, but others are absent, and the state becomes more doubtful by being not progressive.

#### V.

A lady, after the ordinary symptoms of pregnancy for four months, had a slow hæmorrhage for many days. No ovum came away; the hæmorrhage stopped; but though her abdomen was enlarged, from that time forth it did not continue to increase. In this state and without menstruating, she continued five months longer, when, at the end of the ninth month from her first calculation, labour-pains came on, and expelled a shrivelled *fœtus* of the size of the third month. There can be little doubt that it had died before the hæmorrhage. The fact that her labour occurred just at the end of the ninth month is one of the best proofs that labour commences at that time, not from distension of the uterus, but as a law of nature. It is curious that the same process took place in her next pregnancy; the *fœtus* was blighted about the same period, and yet was retained during the natural length of pregnancy. In such doubtful cases as the above, the most prudent plan is to avoid giving a decisive opinion, and, if pushed hard, to state the impossibility of doing so.

## VI.

A poor woman, in doubt about her state, came to consult me. She was healthy, with very regular menstruation when not pregnant, but it had suddenly ceased about six months; her abdomen was large, and she had milk in her breasts. The enlargement of the abdomen was very firm. She was too fat for me to detect any circumscribed tumour; the umbilicus projected, the neck of the uterus was very short, and what little was left of it very soft; the body of the uterus, too, was considerably enlarged, but she felt no movement of the child; and though I examined her in the upright posture, I could not feel its displacement and subsequent fall. She had not enlarged for the last month. The opinion I gave was, that she was pregnant, and that the child was dead; but I could not explain my not finding the *fœtus* moveable. The result of the case explained this. About seven weeks afterwards she was delivered of a dead child, the placenta being attached over the orifice of the uterus. When in my previous examination I had pushed up the *fœtus*, it had fallen on the placenta, the thickness and softness of which prevented the impulse, at the moment of its fall, from being communicated to my finger.

There are two other circumstances in which the practitioner will often be pressed for an opinion, in both of which it is generally impossible to give one: thus, some women are very liable to pass over the natural period of the month without menstruating by one, two, or three weeks, and then to have a violent and somewhat painful hæmorrhage, during which nothing visible passes away but coagula of blood. These cases are commonly said to be early abortions, but this is a mere conjecture without proof.

Another circumstance, in which it is difficult and often impossible to form a decided opinion, is when a hæmorrhage has occurred in early pregnancy, and has ceased without any ovum having been detected. This is no proof that it has not passed away, for it may be so small as to be overlooked in the coagula. Has the patient aborted, and is she no longer pregnant; or has she retained the ovum, and is her pregnancy going on? It is generally impossible to tell with certainty till some time has elapsed; and the more we refrain from decisive opinions, the less are we likely to give erroneous ones.

II. The next class of cases which I shall describe consists in a torpid state of the uterus, with a flatulent state of the intestines:



this is most liable to occur near fifty years of age, when the uterus is about discontinuing its function. At this time menstruation will often cease for several months, and the abdomen becomes distended with a flatulent tumour; the air moving about the bowels gives an inward sensation which is mistaken for the child; there is often slight nausea, various nervous feelings, and an anxiety to believe in pregnancy as a test of youthfulness. About this age, also, the omentum and parietes of the abdomen often grow very fat, forming what Dr. Baillie once called 'a double chin in the belly.' This assemblage of symptoms at this age frequently leads to the supposition of pregnancy, but I have met with many similar cases in young women. I have repeatedly known those who, on the return of their husbands after a long absence, have suddenly ceased to menstruate, and grown large about the belly, conclude that they were pregnant, and make preparations for their confinement. I have known the same happen to single women, who had been secretly incurring the risk of pregnancy; they were generally women of sickly constitutions, who were very subject to obstructed menstruation; and it is probable that in these cases the puzzling assemblage of symptoms was the result rather of mental agitation than of sexual intercourse.

## VII.

A well-dressed young woman came to me one evening, and after a long silence and much agitation, told me that she was unmarried; that a gentleman with whom she was intimate had some months ago taken advantage of her, since which she had never been unwell, and she was now so large that her parents talked of consulting a physician. As she had passed only four months without menstruating, and as I was unwilling to give anything but a conclusive opinion, I advised her to come to me that day month; and to prevent any danger from her alarm, encouraged her to believe that her anxiety was groundless. Exactly that day month, in the evening, a carriage drove to my door, and the same lady was shown into my library. She was excessively agitated, and had come without her stays. As soon as I placed my hand on the abdomen, I was convinced that she was not pregnant; the tumour was so soft and yielding that I could bury my hand in it almost to the spine. I next examined the uterus through the vagina, and found its neck long and firm, and its body unenlarged. I told her that she was not pregnant: on hearing which she fainted away.

## VIII.

I was introduced by an eminent physician to a very young married lady, for the purpose of attending her in her approaching confinement, of which her projecting abdomen gave visible intimations; and I was directed to call on her occasionally, that she might become accustomed to me before the time for my attendance arrived. During these calls I learnt gradually the particulars of her marriage. She had been attached to a young man, her equal in station, but so profligate that her parents forbade him the house; nevertheless, the lovers continued to meet by stealth, and one fatal evening they became as man and wife, in all but the marriage ceremony. After this intercourse had been going on a few months, the young lady observed that her belly was enlarging; it was at length noticed by her mother: this led to an inquiry, and the young lady confessed all. The discovery, of course, produced a great uproar in the family: her parents agreed that as the young couple had gone so far, it was absolutely necessary that they should go a little further: the lover was called upon, and as the young lady had brothers who understood the use of the pistol, the young couple were soon married and placed in furnished lodgings. It was at this period when I was first introduced to them. I continued to call on the bride for some time; but, after two months, I one day remarked that although she still continued large, she was not larger than when I first saw her. When I pressed the abdomen it had not the firmness of pregnancy, and she felt no internal motions; when I inquired about her menstruation, I was told that she had never menstruated in her life; menstruation had not ceased, simply because it had never begun. I now expressed strong suspicions that she was not pregnant, and advised the question to be settled by an examination. It was so. I found the umbilicus sunk, the abdomen distended by a soft flatulent tumour; the neck of the uterus of its full length, its body not in the slightest degree enlarged. I told my patient and her sister that she was not pregnant, but they would not believe me, and directed a consultation with the same eminent physician who had introduced me to them. He met me; and as he was one of the very few medical physicians who are expert at vaginal examinations, he was soon as well satisfied as myself that the young lady was not pregnant. The communication occasioned great disappointment in the family, but in no one so much as in the young husband, whose rage was boundless at



discovering that he had been compelled to marry her on a false supposition.

Of the extent to which fatness of the abdomen and omentum, and flatulence of the intestines, can cause a tumid belly, resembling pregnancy or enlarged ovary, a striking instance occurred at Edinburgh a few years ago, and is related by Mr. Lizars in his work on 'Tumours of the Ovary.'

### IX.

The patient was a poor woman with a large abdomen, and was seen by numerous practitioners. Some thought that she was pregnant, others that she had an enlarged ovary; at length, on the latter supposition, an incision, eight inches long, was made into the abdomen, the cavity of which was thereby laid open: it was then discovered that there was no tumour, and that the enlargement depended on a very fat omentum, and intestines distended with air: the wound was closed and secured, and the patient recovered.

### X.

I saw a similar case about two years ago in Guy's Hospital, under the care of Dr. Bright. The patient was a young woman who had been in the same hospital some time before, for what was supposed to be ovarian dropsy, but purgatives removed the tumour, and she went out of the hospital cured. A few months before I saw her, having a return of the enlargement, she consulted an enterprising surgeon, who assured her that she had a tumour in the ovary, which could be removed only by extirpation: for this purpose he made an incision in the linea alba six inches long, by which the cavity of the abdomen was exposed; it was then discovered, as in the case at Edinburgh, that there was no tumour, and that the enlargement depended entirely on flatulence and fat; the wound was closed and healed; but the patient's health sustained great injury, for the recovery of which she was under Dr. Bright's care. I saw the scar of the incision, which in healing had contracted to four inches, and the marks of the stitches by which the wound had been secured.

### XI.

It is now nearly fifteen years ago, since Joanna Southcott, an aged and virgin prophetess, astonished the town and nation by declaring that she was pregnant by supernatural means. Many medical



men were consulted about her. As the case excited an extraordinary degree of attention, and affords a curious example of that form of spurious pregnancy which I am now describing, I have thought it worth while to select out of the published narratives those particulars which form the medical history of the case, in order to show the extent to which even medical men may be deceived, and the symptoms by which, in such cases, competent judges arrive at the truth. The fullest account of this curious case is a 'Statement of the last Illness and Death of Mrs. Southcott, by Richard Reece, M.D.,' who was consulted about the case, and was present at the examination of her body, and who has given not only the appearances discovered by dissection, but the symptoms during life, and the opinions that were given about them, both by himself and others. His narrative is candid. The first time he saw her was on the 7th of August, 1814, in consultation with several other medical men, when Joanna described her reasons for believing that she was pregnant; begging them to form their opinion by her symptoms, not by her age—as if she was a young woman of twenty-five; truly a very reasonable request. She was sixty-four years of age, and had ceased to menstruate for fifteen years; she had lost her appetite, and was sick; her bosom and belly were much enlarged, and she had felt the movements of the child ever since the month of May. She was willing to submit to any examination, excepting the internal one through the vagina. Dr. Walshman proposed it, but Joanna said that 'her warning spirit had desired her not to submit to it;' on hearing which the doctor refused to see her. Dr. Reece says that her breasts were 'full, plump, and expanded.' 'In that part occupied by the 'womb there was a firm, circumscribed tumour, as large as a man's 'head, bearing the shape of the womb; and I have no doubt,' he says, 'of its being an enlargement of that organ.' The opinion he gave was, that 'the fulness of the belly appeared to be produced by 'enlargement of the womb, but whether it was the effect of pregnancy 'could only be established by the motion of the child.' To detect this, he kept his hand on the abdomen for some time, but no movement of the child could at first be felt; a piece of peach was given her; 'on which,' says the doctor, 'I felt something move under my 'hand, possessing a kind of undulating motion, and appearing and 'disappearing in the same manner as a fœtus.' He adds, 'When 'these symptoms (enlargement of the breasts and abdomen) were 'accompanied by a sensible motion of the womb, I never could

'hesitate in pronouncing it a case of pregnancy, and this was actually 'my opinion of her situation.' A similar opinion appears to have been given by several other medical men, among whom was Dr. Adams, the well-known author of the 'Essay on Morbid Poisons;' and some of them held themselves in readiness to be present at her labour, and witness the birth of her child.

Hitherto Joanna had been seen only by medical men, who, whatever may have been their intelligence and general knowledge of their profession, had never paid any especial attention to the subject, and were not extensively consulted on cases of doubtful pregnancy; but on the 18th of August she was visited by a most competent judge, Dr. John Sims; and on the 3d of September he published a letter in the 'Morning Chronicle,' stating his opinion and the grounds of it: he describes the breasts as large, but more like those 'of an old woman grown corpulent, than those of a pregnant woman.' The areola round the nipple was pale, the enlargement of the abdomen was less hard than that of pregnancy, except at the lower part, 'where there appeared to be a solid tumour, reaching not far above the pubes.' 'I proposed,' says he, 'to put my finger upon the navel without any covering, which was permitted: this part I found sunk in, not at all protruded, as in pregnancy.' No motion was felt. Dr. Sims adds, 'I did not hesitate to declare it to be my opinion that Joanna Southcott was not pregnant.'

The period of her expected delivery now approached, when she was visited by Professor Assalini, who was at that time in London, with the numerous foreigners who came to England, after the first capture of Paris. The professor 'examined her belly,' and told her that her stomach complaint would go off as soon as she was delivered, — a promise he might safely make, and from what I know of him, was most probably ironical. At length Joanna began to think that not her labour but her death was approaching, and she sent for Dr. Reece to give him her instructions. He seems to have had some thoughts of saving the child by the Cæsarean operation; for he asked, 'if apoplexy should supervene, whether I should not make 'an effort to save the life of the child?' But Joanna refused; she continued to suffer much from vomiting, took scarcely any nourishment, and became very weak. Towards the close of the scene, Dr. Reece, finding her belly reduced in size, was convinced that he had been wrong, and that she was not pregnant; and some of her other medical attendants began also to doubt. She died on Monday, the 26th

of December. For four days the body was kept warm, in hopes that she would revive; but putrefaction beginning, leave was at length given to open the body, which was done on the 30th of December, 1814, in the presence of several medical men, among whom were Dr. Adams and Dr. Sims. The body was very putrid; the womb, instead of being enlarged, appeared smaller than natural; it was free from disease, and 'neither the promised Shiloh nor any other foetus was found in it.' The walls of the abdomen were four inches thick, from fat; the intestines were distended with air; the omentum was nearly four times its usual size, and 'one lump of fat.' There were a number of stones in her gall-bladder, which were most probably the cause of her vomiting and her pain. Dr. Reece conjectures that the circumscribed tumour, which he took for the enlarged womb, was the bladder distended with urine, and that Joanna had learnt to retain it in order to produce the swelling. The apparent motion of the child he attributed to a quick movement of the abdominal muscles, which he also thinks she acquired the art of producing, and that to such an extent that 'it was felt in different parts like the appearance of twins.' Mr. Matthias\* thinks that 'the life within her' must have been the movement of flatus. She had, indeed, lived a life well calculated to produce it. She had for some time taken no exercise, kept her bed, and, as her appetite was capricious, pampered it with quantities of improper food. On one occasion, when asparagus was extremely dear, she ate at one meal 160 heads.†

III. Another class of cases liable to be confounded with pregnancy, are tumours of the ovary; this organ, which in its healthy state is smaller even than the unimpregnated uterus, is often more enlarged by disease than the uterus is by pregnancy, and forms, like the latter, a circumscribed tumour, which rises out of the pelvis to various heights in the abdomen. These tumours are sometimes mistaken for pregnancy, but this mistake can hardly be committed by a careful and a competent judge. In most of the cases which I

\* Case of Joanna Southcott, by P. Matthias, Surgeon and Apothecary.

† Not only old women, but even children, have been erroneously supposed to be pregnant. Smellie saw in Mary-le-bone workhouse a girl twelve years old, supposed to be in the eighth month of pregnancy. Several medical men had examined her; one had offered to deliver her gratis; others had made interest to be present at her delivery; the case had been advertised, and the matron had got money from numbers who went to see her. It turned out to be a case of enlarged liver.—*Smellie*, vol. ii, p. 220.



have seen, the duration of the tumour already much beyond nine months is alone a sufficient guide, if it was ever safe (which it never is) to be guided by one circumstance. Another guide is a fluctuation which can generally be felt on striking the abdomen; but the tumour may not have lasted nine months, and may be too solid to afford fluctuation. Under these circumstances the examination of the uterus through the vagina at once settles the question. If the tumour has lasted a few months, and already distends the abdomen to a visible magnitude, the neck of the uterus, if pregnant, would be short and soft, its body enlarged, and the moveable fœtus would be capable of being felt. On the contrary, when this tumour is an enlarged ovary, the neck of the uterus is long and firm, and its body unenlarged.

When a large ovary is mistaken for pregnancy, the error is a harmless one; but pregnancy is sometimes mistaken for dropsy of the ovary, and the patient has been tapped. A woman was taken into the operation-room of a well-known hospital for this purpose, but the surgeon, on learning that she had not been examined, sent her back to her ward: this caution was fortunate, for before the next operation-day she brought forth a child. I have heard several instances of this mistake.

But a woman may have enlarged ovary and yet conceive. Morgagni has said that one ovary might be diseased throughout, and the other nearly so, but provided a portion remained healthy containing one vesicle, the woman was capable of impregnation. I have known several instances in which the ovary was enlarged by disease, and the uterus by pregnancy in the same person; the two tumours went on growing side by side to the full time, and the patients were delivered of living and healthy children, leaving the abdomen still distended with the ovary. Of these patients one has borne three children since her ovary (the right one) had attained considerable magnitude.\* She is still alive, but has ceased to

\* 'We see women who, although hydropsical, nevertheless have children; in proof of which I will allege the example of the wife of M. Duvieux, my colleague, who, having become dropsical after delivery, was treated during several months with all the usual remedies, without any benefit; after which, without suspecting it, she discovered that she was pregnant notwithstanding her dropsy, which, far from diminishing after her delivery, increased and lasted nine years. During this time she had three other children, the one a girl, who at the age of five years and a half looked as if she was seven years old; another a healthy boy.'—*Mauriceau*, tome i, p. 73.

breed. In these cases no serious error was committed; the patients were doubtful of their state, till it was far advanced, when the strong movements of the child, felt externally by the hand, informed them that they were pregnant; but I can easily suppose that such cases might sometimes be very puzzling: the cessation of menstruation would prove nothing, for it is a common occurrence in ovarian dropsy; the enlargement of the uterus might be mistaken for the progressive enlargement of the ovary; the child might be still or dead; the protrusion of the umbilicus attends both pregnancy and enlargement of the ovary. Under these circumstances the true nature of the case could be detected only by examination through the vagina, when the obliterated neck, the enlarged body of the uterus, and the moveable fœtus, would immediately discover it. The bare possibility of such cases is a strong reason for never tapping a married woman without having the uterus previously examined by a person skilful in such examinations.\*

IV. In the cases resembling pregnancy already described, the cause which distends the abdomen is external to the uterus, and by discovering that this organ is not enlarged we know that the patient is not pregnant. But sometimes the cause which distends the abdomen is within the uterus. The enlargement of the abdomen may depend on enlargement of the uterus, and yet the patient may not be pregnant. The bodies which sometimes form within the uterus, and distend it to a size equal to that of pregnancy, are, fortunately for the facility of diagnosis, rare, compared with the other causes of spurious pregnancy. Those which have been mentioned by writers are air, water, hydatids. *Tympanites of the uterus* has been described under two forms; in one the air is formed in the cavity of the uterus, is retained for several months, distends it to a considerable magnitude, and is then expelled: of this I have never seen one

\* 'When a retention of urine takes place in the latter months of pregnancy, as the water accumulates the bladder cannot enlarge equally in all directions, because of the resistance which it meets with posteriorly from the gravid uterus; it therefore assumes a flattened form, and spreads upwards and laterally to great extent over the anterior part of the uterus, at the same time giving under percussion an evident sense of fluctuation to the hand, insomuch that the case has been mistaken for a dropsy. An unfortunate instance of this kind happened to a practitioner in Ireland, who tapped his patient for this supposed dropsy; death was the consequence, and on examination it appeared that the trochar had passed through both sides of the bladder, through the uterus, and even into the head of the child.'—*Lowder, MS. Lectures.*

instance; for the other form, of which I have known several examples, a better name would be *flatus* of the uterus. Air is formed in this organ, but instead of being retained so as to distend the uterus, it is expelled with noise many times a day. It has been doubted whether it really came from the uterus, but in one of my patients there was a circumstance conclusive on this point: she was subject to this infirmity only when not pregnant, but she was a healthy and breeding woman, and the instant she became pregnant her troublesome malady ceased. She continued entirely free from it during the whole of her pregnancy, but a few weeks after delivery her malady returned. Of *dropsy of the uterus* I have never seen a case; there are many on record. The reality of this disease has been often doubted, but an instance related in the 'Medico-Chirurgical Transactions,' by Dr. A. T. Thomson, serves to verify the cases of the older observers. The testimony of a contemporary, whom we know and can trust, produces more effect on our minds than that of twenty witnesses in remote times and places.

Of *hydatids in the uterus* I have met with several instances; the patients had the ordinary symptoms of pregnancy, only with some peculiarity which led them to doubt it, such as the absence of movement in the abdomen, the enlargement of the abdomen being disproportionate to the period of pregnancy, or after advancing rapidly becoming suddenly stationary. In other cases the patient, after supposing herself pregnant, had a discharge, sometimes of blood and sometimes of water, which led her to suppose that she was miscarrying.

## XII.

I was sent for to —, a few miles from London, to see a lady, who having ceased to menstruate for one month, and becoming very sick, concluded that she was pregnant; the next month she had a slow hæmorrhage from the uterus, which had continued incessantly a month when I saw her: she kept nothing on her stomach. On examining the uterus through the vagina its body felt considerably enlarged, and there was a round circumscribed tumour in the front of the abdomen, reaching from the brim of the pelvis nearly to the umbilicus. I saw her several times at intervals of a fortnight, during which the hæmorrhage and the vomiting continued unrelieved; the peculiarity about the case was the uterus, which was greater than it ought to be at this period of pregnancy; it felt also less firm



than the pregnant uterus, more like a thick bladder full of fluid. Eleven weeks from the omission of menstruation she was seized with profuse hæmorrhage; towards evening there came on strong expelling pains, during which she discharged a vast quantity of something which puzzled her attendants. The next morning I found her quite well, her pain, hæmorrhage, and vomiting having ceased. I was then taken into her dressing-room and shown a large wash-hand basin full of what looked like myriads of little white currants floating in red-currant juice; they were hydatids floating in bloody water.

### XIII.

A few weeks after the termination of this case a lady came from a distant part of the country to London, to consult me about her state, which she at first had supposed to be pregnancy, but now began to doubt it; it had lasted for eight months; she had ceased to menstruate at that time, and her abdomen had been gradually growing large, but she felt no movement in the abdomen, and for the last month it had not increased. I examined the uterus both externally and internally; the umbilicus was so flat, and the abdomen though large had so little firmness, that I began to suspect it was distended by air, but on examining the uterus through the vagina, I found its neck obliterated and its body large; though large, however, it felt soft, and reminded me of the case of hydatids, still fresh in my memory. I therefore told her that her size depended on enlargement of the womb, but what the womb was enlarged by must be a subject of conjecture, which I explained by relating the former case. She returned to the country, and about six weeks afterwards I received a letter from her medical attendant, informing me that my conjecture had turned out to be correct, for after several hours of labour-pains, and a great discharge of blood and water, she had expelled half a pailful of uterine hydatids.

In the progress of these cases I believe it impossible to come nearer the truth than this: that the abdomen owes its enlargement to a distended uterus, but what this organ contains is uncertain. The following case was at first supposed to be pregnancy, and afterwards suspected to be hydatids; the result showed that it was neither the one nor the other, yet I do not see how this could have been known during the progress of the case.

## XIV.

A lady, the mother of a large family, having ceased to menstruate for several months, and growing large in the abdomen, concluded that she was with child—at length there came on a profuse and perpetual discharge of water, sometimes mixed with blood, by which her strength was so alarmingly reduced, that first one and then another practitioner was consulted about her, and I met a consultation of four. Through the walls of the abdomen the uterus could be felt, about as high as the umbilicus, and in the vagina the neck of the uterus was found obliterated, and its body enlarged. As every attempt to restrain the discharge and support her strength had been unavailing, and she daily became more exhausted, a silver tube was introduced through the orifice of the uterus into its cavity, that if it was distended by an ovum, the liquor amnii might be drawn off. The tube readily passed in, but on withdrawing the wire no liquor amnii came away. A few hours afterwards she was seized with violent expulsive pains, under which she sunk rapidly and died. I was not present at the examination of the body; but the following statement was sent me by the gentleman who opened it. The uterus was as large as in the sixth month of pregnancy, and its cavity big enough to hold two fists; it contained neither foetus nor hydatids, but a mass about the size of a goose's egg of stringy matter, like very soft placenta, and unattached to the inner surface of the uterus; this surface was red and irregular, like a granulating sore; its walls were thickened as in pregnancy, of a dark red hue, and a flaccid texture.

‘It sometimes happens,’ says Dr. Baillie, ‘though not very often, that the uterus enlarges in size, and becomes much harder than in its natural state. This change corresponds very much to that of scirrhus in other parts of the body, and commonly extends over the whole of the uterus. I have seen it in one case as large as the gravid uterus at the sixth month; ulceration, I believe, is commonly wanting.’ I extract the following from my note-book without alteration, as I cannot abridge it.

## XV.

The wife of a farmer's labourer came to me under the following circumstances: she is forty-five, and looks fifty-five years old, has been married twenty years, without ever being pregnant; three years ago, after a jolt in a cart, she suffered profuse menstruation, to which

she has been subject ever since, and from which she has grown thin and weak ; about eighteen months ago the abdomen began to enlarge ; more than six months ago it became visible through her dress, and since then has increased more rapidly. I was permitted to examine both the abdomen and the vagina. On both sides, the space between the ribs and ilium feels soft and flatulent, while the front of the abdomen, from the pubes upwards, is occupied by a circumscribed tumour of stony hardness ; the umbilicus projects ; the cervix uteri is broad, and as short as in the seventh month of pregnancy ; the space between the cervix and pubes is occupied by a tumour of stony hardness. Here were all the symptoms indicating that the enlargement of the abdomen depended on enlargement of the uterus, yet the patient was not pregnant.

I have now fulfilled the object of this paper, namely, to describe the ordinary symptoms of pregnancy ; to estimate their real value ; to explain the mode of examination by which alone doubtful cases can be decided, and the time proper for its employment ; the causes by which pregnancy, though real, is sometimes obscured ; and the various diseases which resemble it, and are often mistaken for it. If the young practitioner will take the trouble to make his mind master of this detail, and acquire a little familiarity with the feel of the uterus in the pregnant and unpregnant states, I will venture to say that it will generally guide him right. There will be cases, however, in which he will occasionally doubt, and in which the best policy is caution. Some are of opinion, that this art is a blind tact, to be gained only by practice, not a knowledge to be communicated by instruction ; but this is not true : the period of my life when I improved most rapidly in the art of deciding by examination cases of doubtful pregnancy, was that in which I gained clear and orderly notions of the objects of examination. The faculty of observation requires rather to be guided, than to be sharpened ; the finger soon gains the power of feeling, when the mind has acquired the knowledge of what to feel for.



## CHAPTER IV.

## POLYPUS OF THE UTERUS.

I BELIEVE that polypus of the uterus is a more frequent disease than is commonly supposed, and that those who have had great experience without ever meeting with it have most probably repeatedly overlooked it. If mistaken and neglected, it occasions the death of the patient; if detected and removed, she not only lives, but regains perfect health. The cure of polypus of the uterus affords one of the most striking instances of the triumph of our art.

This disease is commonly for a long time mistaken for profuse menstruation; the patient, instead of menstruating regularly and moderately, has frequent and profuse hæmorrhages from the uterus, and in the intervals a pale discharge. These gradually drain her circulation and injure her health, until she acquires the deadly paleness and suffers the complaints which are the ordinary effects of deficiency of blood. The absence of pain in the uterus or pelvis (for there is often none, and never that degree which attends the malignant diseases of this organ,) leads to no suspicion that the hæmorrhages depend on a disease of structure. Tonics and astringents are given in various forms; one practitioner is consulted after another, till at length the uterus is examined, and a polypus is discovered. This is the history of most of the cases which I have met with.

A polypus of the uterus, when discovered, is a tumour in the vagina attached to some part of the uterus. It is round, smooth, firm, and insensible; it is quite unattached to the vagina, so that the finger can be pressed round between the walls of the vagina and the surface of the tumour; but if traced higher up, it is found to terminate in a narrower part or stalk. This stalk is differently attached in different cases; in some it passes through the orifice of the uterus into its cavity, and is attached to the fundus of this organ; in others, it passes into the cavity of the neck, to one side of which it is attached; in others it does not enter the orifice, but is attached to one portion of its edge or lip; hence a distinction of

polypus of the fundus, polypus of the neck, and polypus of the orifice. This distinction must not be lost sight of, for it is of practical consequence. In ascertaining the nature of the tumour for the purpose of determining the propriety of removing it by an operation, the mode of its attachment is one of our chief guides; and in this respect, what is true of polypus of the fundus is not so of polypus of the neck or lip.

In polypus of the fundus, the stalk is completely encircled by the neck of the uterus, and if the finger can be introduced into the orifice, it passes easily round between the stalk of the polypus and the encircling neck.



*A*, polypus of the *fundus*, its stalk growing from that part of the uterus, its body down in the vagina, the lower part of its stalk surrounded by the orifice of the uterus.

In polypus of the neck, the finger cannot be passed quite round the stalk; it may be passed partly round it, but it is stopped when it comes to that part where it is attached to the neck, the stalk is only *semi-circled* by the neck.

In polypus of the edge of the orifice or lip, the stalk does not enter the orifice, but grows from the edge of it; it feels as if a portion of the lip was first prolonged into the stalk, and then enlarged into the body of the polypus. It is important to remember that there is a polypus, the stalk of which is not encircled by the orifice of the uterus; if it grows from the orifice, it cannot be encircled by it.



*C*, polypus of the *neck* of the uterus, its stalk growing from the cavity of the neck, and consequently only semi-circled by the orifice, its body down in the vagina.

When a polypus grows within the uterus, it dilates its cavity, neck, and orifice, as in pregnancy. Instead of the orifice of the projecting part of the neck forming a narrow chink in a firm, thick nipple, it is a round space with thin edges, as in somewhat advanced pregnancy. In polypus of the neck and that of the lip, the projecting part of the uterus preserves more of its ordinary form and consistence.



The internal structure of polypus, in most cases, exactly resembles the internal structure of the *large white tubercle* of the uterus, commonly called the fleshy tubercle; 'so that a person looking on a section of the one and the other, out of the body, could not distinguish between them.'\* They are the same disease, differing only in the seat and mode of their attachment, and consequently in the symptoms which they produce. On cutting into them, we see a hard, whitish substance, intersected by membranous partitions. This, however, is not always its structure; it is sometimes of a much softer and looser consistence, and sometimes has considerable cavities.†



*B*, polypus of the *orifice* or *lip* of the uterus; the orifice is in the front of the stalk, and not at all encircling it, the body of the polypus is down in the vagina.

The external covering of polypus is the internal covering or mucous membrane of the uterus; this was long ago made out by

\* Baillie's Morbid Anatomy. Polypus of the uterus.

† See Levret, p. 31.

dissection. When the patient is cured by the removal of the polypus, it comes away in a putrid state, unfit for minute anatomical examination; so that when the case terminates as it ought to do, we have not a good opportunity of examining the external covering; but sometimes the patient dies before the nature of the case is discovered, and then the tumour can be examined, *attached to the body, and unchanged by an operation*. A woman who for many years had been subject to long and profuse hæmorrhages from the uterus, but had obstinately objected to the part being examined, one day expired in a fainting fit. On examining the body after death, a tumour was found in the vagina, which grew by a narrow stalk from the fundus of the uterus. Levret examined it in the recent state. 'It was,' says he, 'covered externally by an expansion of the membrane which covers the interior of the uterus; on its surface were seen a great number of varicose veins.'\*

A polypus of the uterus differs greatly in size in different cases. I have removed several which were as large as the head of a newborn child. They are commonly of a much more moderate size, and I have known several cases in which frequent hæmorrhages were occasioned by a polypus not larger than a filbert, attached just within the cavity of the neck of the uterus. That the hæmorrhages depended on the polypus, however small, was proved by the event; for they ceased on its removal.

Often as I have touched and removed a polypus, I never *saw* one in the living subject till Mr. Brodie operated on a case in St. George's Hospital (June 5, 1828). An attempt was made to draw the polypus out of the vagina before removing it with the knife, but the attempt failed, and the ligature was ultimately applied in the vagina with my instrument. Whilst this was going on, the orifice of the vagina was so far dilated as to expose the tumour to our view; it was of a pale flesh colour, mottled, or rather streaked with large blue veins, like the round balls of soap at the windows of the perfumers.

Thus a polypus of the uterus is commonly a round, insensible tumour, growing by a stalk from its fundus, cervix, or lip, in its inner structure like a fleshy tubercle, on its outside covered by a mucous membrane of a pale flesh colour, streaked with veins, and occasioning frequent hæmorrhages from the uterus.

When the polypus grows from the fundus of the uterus, it is at

\* Levret, Sur les Polypes de la Matrice, &c., 8vo., p. 180.



first very small, resides within the cavity of this organ, and for some time occasions no uneasiness or disturbance in its functions, by which its existence might be suspected. I have seen a polypus about the size of a filbert, growing by a narrow stalk, in the uterus of a woman who had died of some other disease, and who, during life, had experienced no symptoms of it. As the polypus grows larger it gradually dilates the uterus, till at length this organ, stimulated by its bulk, begins to contract upon it, protruding it through the dilated orifice. The polypus sometimes passes through the orifice gradually and insensibly, sometimes suddenly during the action of the bowels. I have known several instances in which patients, after this action, have been suddenly seized with retention of urine, and on examination a polypus was found in the vagina, compressing the urethra.

Whilst the tumour resides within the uterus, it cannot be felt in a common examination, and the nature of the disease is generally overlooked. Of this the following case affords a striking instance.

#### I.

A lady who had been subject to frequent and profuse hæmorrhages from the uterus, had consulted two eminent practitioners in Edinburgh, without relief. The uterus was examined, but no change of structure was discovered. As she passed through London on her way to the Continent, she consulted me. I examined the uterus, and discovered nothing. She went to Rome, and then to Geneva, at both which places she consulted some of the most eminent practitioners, by whom the uterus was examined, but nothing was discovered, excepting that it was a little larger than natural. Thus far the disease was considered as common menorrhagia. After being absent from England a year and a half, she returned to London worse than when she went. A few days after her arrival, she had a recurrence of the hæmorrhage, but it was attended by an unusual symptom; the blood came away in large coagula attended with bearing-down pains. As soon as the hæmorrhage had ceased, I advised her to allow me to examine the uterus, though I little expected what I was to find. She consented, and the next morning I visited her at her hotel before she was up. As I passed my hand under the bed-clothes I said, 'I fully expect to find nothing,' yet the next instant I had my finger upon a polypus; it was about the size of a large walnut, with a slender neck encircled by the orifice of the uterus. It was easily removed, the hæmorrhages have never returned,



and she has since enjoyed perfect health. There can be no doubt that the polypus was expelled into the vagina during the pains which attended the last hæmorrhage, and that I had the rare good luck to examine almost immediately after the tumour was discoverable. If I had examined before those pains, I should have overlooked the disease, as I, as well as her attendants at Edinburgh, Rome, and Geneva, had done before.

When polypus of the fundus descends into the vagina, the stalk drags downwards that portion of the fundus to which it is attached, so that in this stage of the disease it is generally complicated with some partial inversion of the uterus. An inattention to this important fact has led to fatal consequences.

When a tumour supplied with vessels, and consequently capable of bleeding, grows from an organ so subject to bleed as the uterus, it is difficult to demonstrate whether the hæmorrhage arises from the tumour, or from the uterus. The strong reason for attributing the hæmorrhages to the tumour, is this. As soon as a ligature is applied, and tightened round the stalk, the hæmorrhage from that time ceases, although it may be several days before the tumour comes away.

It was an opinion of M. Levret, that a polypus did not bleed whilst it remained within the uterus, but that after its expulsion into the vagina, the orifice of the uterus, by constricting the stalk, impeded the return of blood in its veins, which consequently burst, and bled profusely. This opinion, however, is contradicted by the foregoing case as well as others which I shall have occasion to relate: a polypus of the neck or of the orifice of the uterus projects from the beginning into the vagina; consequently, it does not undergo that expulsion from the uterus, which takes place in polypus of the fundus, and is capable of being detected from the commencement.

In the treatment of this disease, the chief difficulty is in the diagnosis: when once detected, any surgeon with a proper instrument is competent to remove it, but the nature of the case is almost always overlooked, and when a tumour is detected I have known the most experienced practitioners hesitate about its nature, and consequently about the propriety of the operation.

As tumours are often found in the vagina, which somewhat resemble polypus, but which are very dissimilar in their nature and treatment, it is important to learn the marks by which they may be distinguished. The tumours which are likely to be mistaken for

polypus, are, 1. the prolapsed uterus; 2. the inverted uterus; 3. malignant excrescences from the uterus.

It is not likely that any man of moderate knowledge and experience should mistake prolapsus for a polypus of the uterus. In prolapsus, the tumour has its most depending part a palpable orifice, that of the uterus, into which a probe or bougie can be passed several inches; the tumour is sensible, so that if pricked or scratched the patient feels it; the tumour grows broader the higher the finger is passed, and it cannot pass high, for it is soon stopped by the angle where the vagina is attached round to the uterus. The higher the tumour is pushed the easier does the patient become. In all these particulars the polypus is just the opposite: it has no orifice, it is insensible, so that if pricked or scratched, the patient does not feel it; the finger can be passed very high, and the higher it is passed the narrower becomes the tumour; the higher the tumour is pushed the more easy becomes the patient. I have seen many cases of this kind which gave occasion to doubts, but never one in which it became a question whether the tumour was prolapsus, or polypus of the uterus.

Inverted uterus being a rarer occurrence, is less likely to be met with; but when it is, it is more likely to be mistaken for polypus. When the uterus is only partially inverted, that is, when its fundus only is drawn down through its orifice into the vagina, and the patient has survived for many months, the tumour feels exactly like a polypus of the fundus. The distinguishing marks are the time of its first appearance, which must have been immediately after delivery, and its sensibility. In the smoothness of its surface, the roundness of its body, the narrowness of its neck, and its being completely encircled by the orifice of the uterus, it sometimes exactly resembles polypus of the fundus, of which the following case affords an example.

## II.

The first time I saw the patient was in consultation with Dr. Clarke, and Dr. Henry Davies; she had been delivered some months before at St. Omer, and immediately after the removal of the placenta, which had been extracted with some violence, a tumour had been felt projecting from the uterus into the vagina, since which she had not only had no hæmorrhages, but had not had even ordinary menstruation. When we examined the tumour, we found it about the size of a small apple, with a smooth surface, a somewhat narrow



stalk, which was completely encircled by the orifice of the uterus, exactly like a polypus, but its quick sensibility to touch, and the circumstances under which it made its first appearance, inclined us to believe that it was an inverted uterus, and not to recommend its removal, particularly as she was losing no blood, and her health was sustaining no injury from it. She returned to the Continent, and I did not see her again for two years, when she again came to London, to place herself under the care of Dr. Granville, who had recommended her to submit to an attempt to revert it, and I now saw her in consultation with the doctor. Since my former interview with her, she had become subject to frequent and profuse hæmorrhages, which had bleached her face and broken her health, and it now became an urgent object to afford her relief even at some risk. We agreed, therefore, that the attempt should be made to revert the tumour; but if this failed, which appeared most likely, we proposed to her husband the removal of the tumour by the ligature, stating to him that such an operation had been done successfully, but that it was attended with considerable risk. This both he and the patient were willing to incur; the attempt at reduction failed, but before applying the ligature, her former attendants, Dr. Clarke, and Dr. Henry Davies, were consulted, and all of us agreeing to recommend the operation, the ligature was applied by Dr. Clarke; it was tightened every other day, and each time occasioned so much pain as to require a large opiate to quiet it. At length on the fourteenth day both instrument and tumour came away: there were times when I had a strong suspicion that it was a polypus, but a sight of the tumour proved that it was the fundus of the uterus, for it was a hollow cup, the size of a small apple, in the cavity of which could be seen the Fallopian tubes. Excepting the pain and some vomiting, the patient had no bad symptoms during the progress of the cure, and several months afterwards her husband called on me to say she was quite well.

A more frequent subject of doubt is, whether the tumour which projects from the uterus into the vagina is a common polypus, which admits of removal and permanent cure, or a malignant excrescence, which, if removed, grows again, and terminates fatally. On this question I shall say little at present, because I shall return to it in the second part of this paper, where I speak of some unusual forms of polypus. All I shall remark here is, that whenever the tumour has a stalk, which can be included in a ligature without any danger of



including the neck or fundus of the uterus, I would apply it; it succeeds in an immense proportion of cases. I have known it succeed in several, where, from the cauliflower roughness of the tumour, others had been deterred from it, and even if the excrescence should return, the patient is not worse off than she was before. She has had the only chance which art can afford her, and has lost nothing even if it fails.

If polypus of the uterus is overlooked or neglected it ultimately destroys the patient. Frequent hæmorrhages drain the circulation to the lowest point compatible with life, till at length a fresh hæmorrhage occasions a fainting fit or convulsions, in which the patient dies. It is a practical rule, therefore, of vital importance, that whenever hæmorrhages from the uterus resist the ordinary means, the nature of the case should be certified by examination. I have heard of several fatal cases from a neglect of this rule, and many are recorded in books.\*

When hæmorrhages from the uterus arises from a polypus, medicines are useless. The only effectual way to cure the hæmorrhages is to remove the polypus. This may be done either with the knife, as is practised in Paris, or by applying a ligature round the stalk, and tightening it until the tumour falls off. I have never used any other means than the latter, and, as it has served me successfully for many years, and in numerous cases, so that I wish I had as good cure for all diseases, I shall not abandon it for the knife, which, if I may judge from cases which have been related to me, is not always so safe and successful.

It may be easily supposed, and if an attempt is made, it would soon be found, that to pass a ligature round a tumour, situated in a deep and narrow canal like the vagina, is not an easy task without an instrument adapted for the purpose.† That which I use consists

\* See Dessault's surgical works, edited by M. Roux, vol. iii. *Mémoires sur les Polypes*. *Medico-Chirurg. Journal and Review*, for December, 1816. *Levret, Sur les Polypes de la Matrice*, p. 180.

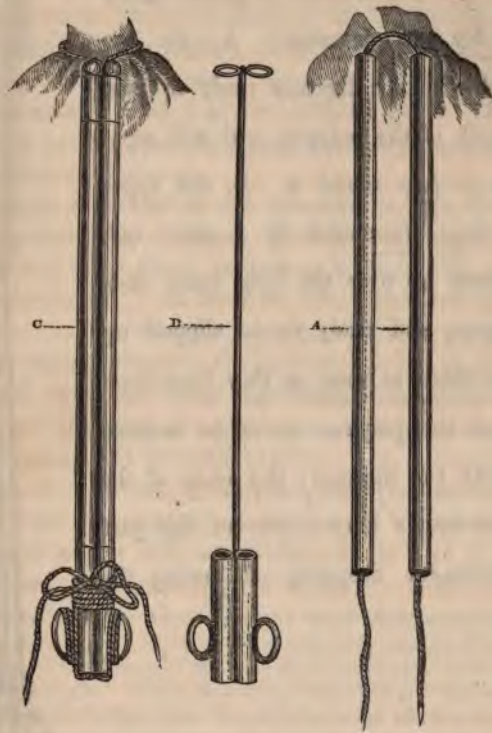
† How difficult this operation sometimes is if not facilitated by some mechanical contrivance may be seen in the case published by Dr. Denman. He describes himself, Case the 4th, as making many and strenuous attempts to pass the ligature, but without success. At length the ligature was applied, but the patient died before the polypus came away, and appears to have been lost from the unsuccessful attempts of the operation. In Dr. Hunter's museum there is a large polypus, with the statement that after many attempts to pass the ligature the patient died.—(See *Denman's Midwifery*, vol. i., p. 100.)

of two tubes, capable of being separated and joined, and was originally contrived by a German surgeon, of the name of Niessen, but has since undergone many changes in the hands of different surgeons, especially Levret. A representation of its latest form has been copied from 'Richter's System of Surgery' into Mr. Samuel Cooper's 'First Lines of Surgery.' In this sketch the two tubes are curved to correspond with the curvature of the vagina and sacrum.

In this instrument I made two changes, the principal one consisted in making the tubes straight instead of curved, the latter form I found unnecessary even with the largest polypi; and it was liable to this great inconvenience, that when the tubes had been passed round the polypus, so as to meet again on the opposite side, if the upper extremities deviated in the slightest degree from each other, (an accident which it was almost impossible to prevent, and which took place, notwithstanding their lower extremities were perfectly parallel,) it was impossible to slip up the cross part which was to join them together. On the contrary, if the tubes were straight it was necessary only to keep the lower extremities perfectly parallel to insure a similar apposition of the upper, and the cross part could be slipped up without any difficulty.

The instrument which I use for this purpose, and which in numerous cases has assisted me easily through the operation, consists of two silver tubes, each eight inches long, perfectly straight, separate from one another, and open at both ends. A long ligature, consisting of strong whip-cord, is to be passed up the one tube and down the other, so that the middle of the ligature passes across from the upper end of one tube to the upper end of the other, and the two ends of the ligature hang out at the lower ends; the tubes are now to be placed side by side, and, guided by the finger, are to be passed up the vagina, along the polypus, till their upper ends reach that part of the stalk round which the ligature is to be applied; and now the tubes are to be separated, and while one is fixed, the other is to be passed quite round the polypus till it arrives again at its fellow tube, and touches it. It is obvious that a loop of the ligature will thus encircle the stalk. The two tubes are now to be joined so as to make them form one instrument; for this purpose two rings, joined by their edges, and just large enough to slip over the two tubes, are to be passed up till they reach the upper ends of the tubes which they bind together immoveably. Two similar rings, connected with the upper

by a long rod, are slipped over the lower ends of the tubes so as to bind them in like manner; thus these tubes, which at the beginning of the operation were separate, are now fixed together as one instrument. By drawing the ends of the ligatures out at the lower external ends of the tubes, and then twisting and tying them on a part of the instrument which projects from the lower rings, the loop round the stalk is thereby tightened, and, like a silk thread round a wart, causes it to die and fall off.



*A*, the two silver tubes armed with the ligature, and applied to that part of the stalk which is to be encircled by the ligature; one tube a little separated from the other on its way round the polypus to meet its fellow tube on the opposite side.

*B*, the rings which bind the tubes into one instrument, the upper and lower joined together by a long silver rod; on the lower the projection or shoulders.

*C*, the two tubes joined together by the upper and lower rings; at the *upper end* a loop of the ligature round the stalk, at the *lower end* the ends of the ligatures twisted round the shoulders of the instrument.



The most convenient mode of preparing the instrument for the operation. A, the two tubes armed with the ligature ready to pass up to the stalk of the polypus, and still separable so as to pass round it. B, the upper and lower rings, connected by a silver rod, already slipped up over the long outer ends of the ligature, and ready to be slipped up over the two tubes as soon as they have been passed round the polypus, so as to encircle the stalk with the ligature; the ends of the ligature made into a knot to prevent this part of the instrument dropping off during the operation.



The instrument being thus adjusted is to be left, but every night and morning is to be untwisted from the shoulder of the instrument, drawn tighter, and then fixed again round the projecting part, and this is to be done morning and night. As the instrument projects out of the vagina, if the patient was, whilst turning from side to side, to sit down upon it, she might impale herself on it; an accident which I have heard once took place, and terminated fatally. To prevent this, the late Dr. Clarke contrived a round flat wooden shield, which is fixed to his instrument so close to the outer orifice, that even if the patient was to sit down on the instrument, it could not be thrust higher in the vagina. I have always satisfied myself with making the patient understand the necessity for care in turning, but such a guard could easily be adapted to my instrument; if the projecting part or shoulders were made two inches broader, they would answer the purpose.

The only danger attendant on the operation is, that the ligature may include a portion of the uterus. Dr. Denman passed a ligature round a polypus of the fundus; as soon as he tightened it, he produced pain and vomiting. As soon as the ligature was slackened, these symptoms ceased; but whenever he attempted to tighten it, the pain and vomiting returned; the ligature was left on, but loose; the patient died about six weeks afterwards, and on opening the body, it was discovered that the uterus was inverted, and that the ligature had included the inverted portion. Mr. Abernethy in his Lectures states, that he has opened the bodies of several women who had died from the ligature of polypus of the uterus. This accident happened to Dr. William Hunter, and he used to relate it in his Lectures as a warning to others.\*

\* 'A young woman,' says he, 'came to me from a man-midwife in the City, desiring that I would examine her. I found a monstrously large tumour filling up the vagina. I wrote word that I thought she must die, if the tumour was not removed. She was a poor servant-girl. With a long instrument I tied it in the best manner I could. She complained of vast pain. I had before asked whether she ever had a child, and she assured me she had not. I thought the womb could not be inverted, as she had not been with child. I therefore begged her to bear the pain, made the ligature tight, gave her an opiate, and left her, desiring my friend to visit her; from him I learnt that the pain had been violent, but had ceased, and her pulse was low and quick. She died; I examined the body, and found the uterus inverted, though she had never had a child, and that I had tied this. In this case my mind is easy, for my intentions were upright; however, for the future I have made it a rule, never to make a ligature until I am quite clear that there are no parts of the tumour but what may be included.'—See *Dr. W. Hunter's Manuscript Lectures—Polypus Uteri.*

## III.

The following case, of which the result was similar, occurred at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in the year 1828. The patient was a poor woman about forty years of age, who had been delivered by the forceps about six months before, on which occasion a tumour was found in the vagina. When I saw her first, she was in the following state: she had a large tumour, which, when she was in the upright posture, protruded externally, but could easily be returned. It was as large as the head of a new-born infant, and was attached by a stalk, nearly as thick as the wrist, to the usual seat of the cervix uteri, but I could not feel the orifice of the uterus. The tumour was of a pale flesh colour, had a knotty surface, and felt firm. The patient had a profuse colourless discharge, but she had no hæmorrhages, and had for some time ceased to menstruate. The ligature was applied round what was supposed to be the stalk of the tumour: it occasioned little pain when it was first applied, but towards evening it became so severe as to resemble labour. It was relieved by an opiate, so that she passed a comfortable night; but the next day the pain increased, extending up the loins, and down the limbs. The ligature was tightened every day with a recurrence of pain, which required an opiate: the tumour became livid and the discharge foetid. On the seventh day a violent hæmorrhage came on, which occasioned death-like faintings and cold sweats. The hæmorrhage was arrested by a local astringent, and the fainting relieved by brandy and ammonia, but she continued to have much pain with vomiting, and at length died on the fifteenth day after the operation. On opening the body, the uterus was found of its natural size and structure; the tumour grew from the orifice of the uterus all around so as to be continuous with the cervix, and so as to cover the aperture of the uterus, and to make it impossible to say where the neck of the uterus ended, and the stalk of the tumour began. The ligature had been applied so high as to include the projecting neck of the uterus: the posterior part of it had occasioned ulceration into the cavity of the peritoneum, in which there was an aperture of about an inch in extent: the inner structure of the tumour was similar to the fleshy tubercle; there was no inflammation of the peritoneum.

The danger of including the uterus in the ligature may, I think, always be avoided by the following rules: 1st. Instead of aiming at passing the ligature as high as possible on the stalk, to pass it as



low as possible, taking care to pass it over the body of the tumour. It is true, by these means a portion of the stalk will be left above the ligature; but I know by experience that it does not grow again; like the remnant of the umbilical cord, it dies and falls away. These tumours have little life, and die above as well as below the ligature. By a case which I shall soon relate, it will be shown that this is not a matter of probability, but of certainty. 2d. When the stalk grows from the cervix, if the os uteri can be felt, it will be the best guide where the neck ends and the stalk begins; the ligature ought to be applied a little below the orifice, but if it cannot be felt, the next best guide is the ordinary length of the projecting part of the neck, that is, about two-thirds of an inch. When the polypus is very large, and the vagina closely contracted, it is difficult or impossible to reach the stalk and the cervix, so as to make anything like an accurate measurement, and the first rule only is practicable. 3d. To attend to the sensations of the patient when the ligature is tightened; if it gives much pain, there is every reason to believe that it has included a part of the uterus.

The time required for the ligature to make its way through, depends on the thickness of the stalk, and the frequency with which the ligature is tightened; this ought to be night and morning; it most commonly requires four or five days, but sometimes only two, and sometimes as long as ten. As soon as the ligature is tightened, the hæmorrhage, if it has continued up to the moment of the operation, generally ceases; a foetid discharge, more foetid every day, comes away, which requires to be washed out by tepid water injected night and morning. When the polypus is of a moderate size, it falls away, together with the instrument; but when very large, the instrument drops out, leaving the polypus loose from its attachment, but confined within the vagina, in which case I once found a vectis necessary for its extraction.

Nothing can be more successful than this operation generally is. A disease which has resisted remedies for several years is removed within a week; the hæmorrhages which had lasted so long, and had occasioned so much debility, suddenly cease; and the patient rapidly recovers her health. Sometimes, however, this requires to be assisted by the usual restorative remedies, such as pure air, tonics, especially bark, or steel, and sea-bathing, if the season admits of it.

M. Roux, of Paris, has published, in the third volume of his edition of Dessault's works, a '*Mémoire sur les Tumeurs Polypoides,*'

in which he states that polypus of the uterus is *generally* accompanied by similar tumours within the substance of the uterus, and that when this is the case, it is in vain to apply the ligature. If this were correct, the result would be, that the operation would *generally* not succeed, whereas, the truth is, it hardly ever fails. There is perhaps not an operation in surgery more, and few so uniformly successful, as the ligature of the polypus of the uterus.\*

It is not an uncommon notion, that when the stalk of the polypus is very thick, the ligature is inapplicable. 'Sometimes,' says Dr. William Hunter, 'polypi do not grow by a small peduncle, but by a thick root from the uterus, and we cannot well apply the ligature.'†

'A young woman died at the poor-house at ———: her disease had not been suspected till a few hours before her death. On opening the body, a polypus was discovered eight inches long, growing from the fundus of the uterus, by a stalk three inches in diameter.' The writer adds, 'Had the precise nature of the case been ascertained before death, the extraordinary breadth of the base of the polypus would, I conceive, have precluded every well-grounded expectation of a fortunate issue from any attempt at removal.'‡ I have repeatedly applied the ligature to very thick-necked polypi, with no other inconvenience than that the ligature was many days making its way through. This fear of polypi with thick necks as unsuitable for the operation is of modern date and not reasonable. M. Levret relates several instances in which the stalk was very thick, yet the operation was successful. In one, the stalk was as thick as the fore arm; in the other, it was three inches in diameter, the very dimensions of the case which died in the poor-house.§ Even supposing the operation attended with greater

\* M. Roux relates the case of a woman who died in the Hôtel Dieu from hemorrhage and convulsions. On opening the body a polypus was discovered adhering to the neck of the uterus, and a tubercle of a similar structure in the anterior wall of this organ. M. Roux asks, 'of what advantage could a ligature have been? None without doubt; the other tumour would undoubtedly have caused the patient's death. *This reasoning applies to all similar cases, of which the number is unfortunately greater than that of the dispositions favourable to the success of the operation.*' It is difficult to say what can have led M. Roux into this practical error, for such it is, and too important a one to pass over.

† MS. Lectures.

‡ Med.-Chirurg. Journal and Review for December, 1816.

§ Mémoires de l'Académie Royale de Chirurg. tome iii. p. 537.



difficulty, and the result more questionable than when the stalk is narrow, it affords the only chance of saving the patient, and that a very probable one.

Having now described the common polypus of the uterus, the symptoms which it produces, and its fatal tendency, the cases with which it may be confounded, and how to distinguish them, the mode of cure, the dangers of the operation, and how to avoid them, I will relate one or two cases, to show the young surgeon the obscurity in which the disease is sometimes involved, and the deplorable circumstances from which he may withdraw his patient by a prudent application of the foregoing rules of practice. These cases I shall select from among the most difficult which I have met with, so that he need not anticipate the same difficulties as of ordinary occurrence.

#### IV.

A lady between thirty and forty years of age, who had been married many years without ever being pregnant, and resided in a provincial city, became subject to frequent and violent hæmorrhages from the uterus. She was attended first by her family surgeon, and next she was seen by one of the most eminent and experienced of the provincial surgeons, by whom her uterus was examined and pronounced to be cancerous. As she was one of a religious family, the fatal nature of her complaint was explained to her, and as she suffered much pain, she was resigned to nightly and sometimes daily opiates. As her symptoms neither grew better nor worse, the uterus, after a long interval, was examined again, and it was then discovered that what was supposed to be a scirrhus, was in reality a large polypus. It was thought, however, impossible or unsafe to remove it until it had descended lower; for it was too high up for the application of the ligature. Months passed, during which she continued to take opium, lose blood, and become anasarcaous. A time having been fixed when it would be probable that the tumour would be low enough for the application of the ligature, and that time having arrived without the hoped-for result, she determined to wait no longer, but travel by short and easy journeys to London, where she arrived one evening. I saw her the next morning. She was anasarcaous from head to foot. so much so in the face as almost to obliterate her features; pain and sleepless nights required two full opiates every day; she vomited frequently, and had a quick pulse. I found the vagina filled with a tumour so large, that although I could pass my finger round it,



I could not pass it high enough to feel the thickness of the stalk, or the place of its attachment; the smoothness of the tumour, however, and its perfect insensibility, convinced me it was a polypus, and without leaving the house I applied the ligature by means of my usual instrument. There was no difficulty in getting them round, and consequently encircling the stalk with a noose of the ligature, which I took care to apply not as high, but as low as possible on the stalk. Provided the ligature is above the body, the lower it is on the stalk the less likely it is to include a portion of the uterus, which is the only danger to which the operation is liable. I continued to tighten the ligature night and morning for several days; at length one evening the instrument with the ligature came away; leaving the polypus still in the vagina; but about an hour or two afterwards, violent painful contractions of the abdominal muscles, like labour pains, came on, which alarmed her friends; and when I arrived, I found the tumour at every pain protruding at the external orifice. With a dry towel I grasped the projecting tip of the tumour, and desiring her to strain during the pains, the huge polypus slipped away. It is a curious circumstance, which I have repeatedly witnessed, that the tumour, which, during its attachment to the uterus, has never excited expelling pains, should, as soon as it is separated, and is become an extraneous body, excite painful contractions to cast it off. She left off her opium, and did little more than keep her bowels freely open, and return to the country, where in a few months she recovered her health, and is at this time perfectly well.

## V.

I went ten miles from London to see a lady, of whom I received the following particulars from her family surgeon, Mr. Butler, of Woolwich:—For nearly two years she had been subject to long and profuse menstrual periods, in which she calculated that she lost ten times what she did when she was in health. Fifteen months ago the uterus had been examined by an eminent practitioner, who discovered nothing but that it was larger than was natural. About five months ago, during expulsive pains, a tumour had descended into the vagina, and was now so large as to fill the pelvis, and occasion a retention of urine, which required the frequent introduction of the catheter. The hæmorrhages were more profuse than ever; she had lost all colour in her face, and was so weak that she never left her bed. She complained of pains in the pelvis, had a quick

pulse, vomited often, and took little food. I found a tumour in the vagina, with a smooth surface and insensible. I could pass my finger all round it, but it was so large that it was impossible to reach above it so as to feel the stalk, and where it was attached. I was driven to this alternative, therefore, either not to apply the ligature, and thereby abandon the patient to a sure death, or to apply it with a good deal of uncertainty about the part which it encircled. I of course preferred the latter, taking all the precautions with which I was acquainted to avoid including any portion of the uterus. I passed up the two canulæ side by side, armed with the ligature, kept one as a fixed point, moved the other round the tumour till it arrived again at the other canulæ, taking care to pass them only just above the most bulky part of the tumour. This was done with all the facility which this instrument usually gives me. The two canulæ were now joined by sliding up the rings, the ligature was tightened and secured in the usual way. Mr. Butler promised to visit her night and morning, and tighten the ligature at each visit; and I was to see her in two days. When I went I was alarmed at the state in which I found her; she complained of pain in the uterus, had a pulse of 130, and had vomited frequently. On inquiring, however, I found that these symptoms had troubled her almost daily for many months, only in a less degree. I saw Mr. Butler tighten the ligature; and it was done so boldly, without any increase of pain, that I was satisfied that what she did suffer was not caused by the ligature having included a portion of the uterus. She was directed to take a purge; and if, after that had operated, pain or vomiting should continue, to take a small opiate every four hours. When I saw her two days after this, I was told that the day before her pain and vomiting had subsided, her pulse had fallen to 90, and she appeared very well; but about four o'clock in the morning Mr. Butler had been called out of his bed, and when he went he found her in strong expulsive pains, which had continued occasionally ever since,—that is, till about four in the afternoon, and by which about half the tumour had been protruded externally. In this case nature had been unable to effect the delivery, and we resolved to finish it. I grasped the tumour with a dry napkin, and by a little pulling, assisted by a little forcing on the side of the patient, the whole tumour was expelled. It was as big as two fists; the stalk was as thick as a wrist, and the ligature had still much of it to cut through. We therefore determined to remove the tumour by more speedy means. Whilst I grasped it with



a towel, to prevent its being drawn back again into the vagina, Mr. Butler cut it off just below the ligature, and then slipped the stalk, with the ligature attached to it, back again into the vagina. Having removed the body of the tumour, I could examine the stalk, and the seat of its attachment; the orifice of the uterus encircled it, and on introducing the finger between the orifice and the stalk, it passed up barely an inch before it was stopped by the part to which the stalk grew. The polypus, in descending into the vagina, had drawn down the fundus of the uterus, so as to change it from an upright vault into a low flat roof, not more than an inch from the edge of the orifice. The stalk was as thick as a wrist, and hung two or three inches into the vagina. The removal of the tumour was followed by a perfect calm; the pain ceased, the pulse became moderate, the sickness disappeared, the patient took nourishment, and when I saw her two days afterwards, she was going on so well that I left her under the care of Mr. Butler. I have often been asked what becomes of the stalk when a considerable portion of it has been left behind; and the only answer I could give was, that it certainly did not lead to a return of the disease, and I conjectured that it withered and fell off. In this case, however, I can give a more precise answer. For several days after the removal of the polypus, fragments, like sloughing cellular membrane, in large quantities, came away with a discharge; at length this ceased, the discharge subsided, and a short time afterwards she had a natural and moderate menstrual period. The uterus was examined soon afterwards; its orifice was wide open, and readily admitted the finger to a considerable depth; it was examined again two months afterwards, when the orifice and body were found contracted to their natural dimensions; she was then menstruating regularly, and had regained the looks, feelings, and functions of health.

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OF POLYPUS OF THE UTERUS, ATTENDED BY UNUSUAL  
CIRCUMSTANCES.

I. IN a vast proportion of cases—to speak in numbers, in nine out of ten—to whatever part the stalk grows, frequent hæmorrhages from the uterus form the symptom of the disease, which attracts the chief attention of the practitioner, and the case is long mistaken for common menorrhagia; but when the tumour grows from the neck



or lip of the uterus, it sometimes occasions nothing but an obstinate and profuse leucorrhœa. The following case shows this, and shows also how liable diseases of this part are to be overlooked for want of examination by touch.

## VI.

I was sent for one evening to see a lady about thirty years old, and was told that she had been troubled for nearly two years with profuse leucorrhœa. As she was unmarried, I was going to prescribe for her without examination, when I was told this would not be satisfactory. It then came out she had seen another physician that morning, whose statement appeared to her and her mother so incredible that they would not believe it until it was corroborated by a second medical witness; but I was not allowed either to meet this physician, or to know what this statement had been. Little as I expected it, I found a small polypus, about the size of a walnut, growing by a slender stalk to the cervix uteri. The ligature was successfully applied, and the patient recovered.

II. Women who have a polypus of the uterus, especially if it grows from the neck or lip of this organ, sometimes become pregnant. Of this I have known two instances. In one the tumour was discovered in the fifth month of pregnancy, and was removed by the ligature. The pregnancy went on to the ninth month, when the patient was safely delivered. In the other case the tumour was not discovered till the commencement of labour, and occasioned the death of the patient a few hours after delivery.

## VII.

Mr. Borrett, surgeon at Yarmouth, with whom, when this happened, I was residing as pupil, was called to a lady in labour with her sixth child. On his first examination he found a large fleshy tumour within the vagina. The anterior segment of the os uteri was easily felt, but the posterior was occupied and covered by the attachment of the tumour. After the orifice had dilated, and the membranes had burst, the head of the child not descending, Mr. Borrett introduced his hand, brought down the feet, and extracted the child. The placenta was expelled spontaneously. The patient now being delivered, and easy, he left her at seven in the morning. At three in the afternoon he found her in strong pains, as if there was another child; but as the abdomen was flat, and the contracted uterus could be distinctly felt in the abdomen, he was satisfied that

there was not, and gave her an opiate. At eight o'clock at night he found that the pains continued violent, with a sensation as of a substance coming away, and on examination he discovered a soft round tumour pressing against the outer orifice. What could it be? He would have thought that it was the uterus inverted, but it was the same tumour which he had felt in the morning before the child was born; there was no hæmorrhage; the placenta had been expelled spontaneously, and the uterus was distinct in the hypogastric region. He consulted his medical friends in the town, and sent off to Norwich for Mr. Rigby. The pains continued with violent expulsive efforts all night, and the next morning they found her with a languid pulse and a pallid countenance; a large fleshy livid tumour had been forced out of the vagina, and every pain brought it more and more in sight: she continued to suffer and to sink through the rest of the day: in the evening Mr. Rigby arrived, but she had expired about half an hour before. As soon as he arrived he examined the tumour, and was convinced that it was the inverted uterus. On opening the body next morning the uterus was found contracted, but its orifice was dragged down as low as the external orifice by a tumour which grew from it by a thick stalk; it was attached to the posterior part of the orifice, and some way up the neck, was of a livid colour, and weighed three pounds fifteen ounces.

What would have been the result of this case, if a ligature had been applied round the stalk of the tumour, and its body cut off just below, as in the case No. V?

III. When the polypus grows from the lip of the uterus, and its stalk is very thick, as two or three inches in diameter, the other lip and the orifice of the uterus are quite lost, and cannot be detected by touch. In this case, of which I have seen several instances, instead of feeling a slender stalk encircled by the orifice of the uterus, or the stalk and the orifice by the side of it distinct from one another, we feel at the top of the vagina, where the neck of the uterus usually projects into its cavity, a thick stalk, which lower down enlarges into a globular tumour, without any vestige of the neck or orifice of the uterus. I have seen the most experienced practitioners in London puzzled to tell what was the nature of the tumour, and what ought to be done for it.

The following case is a specimen of this puzzling combination of circumstances.

## VIII.

A lady, forty years of age, who had never been pregnant, came to London for advice for frequent hæmorrhages from the uterus, which had not been relieved by the usual remedies, and had greatly injured her health. On examination there was found in the vagina a large round tumour, terminating in a very thick stalk, which grew from the situation of the neck of the uterus. This stalk, however, was not encircled by the orifice of the uterus, either completely, as in polypus of the fundus uteri, or partially, as in polypus of the neck. No orifice could be felt. On passing the finger round the uppermost part of the stalk, it formed, with the adjoining part of the vagina, a blind corner all round, as is felt in passing the finger round the neck of the uterus. For some time the nature of the tumour and the propriety of an operation were much doubted, and on this point I was consulted. On carefully examining it, I felt a little depression at the uppermost and anterior part of the stalk. This, I conjectured, was the orifice of the uterus, small, from the patient never having been pregnant, and dragged out of its natural direction, and obscured by the thickness of the stalk. That a thick stalk growing from the edge of the orifice might so obscure that orifice as to make it difficult to be felt, particularly in a woman who had never been pregnant, seemed intelligible and probable. The tumour was insensible, smooth, and of the consistence of a polypus. Thus it appeared so reasonable to believe that the tumour was a polypus, so certain that if it was not removed the patient would ultimately die of the hæmorrhages, and so probable that the operation would be successful, that, notwithstanding the obscurities of the case, I advised it to be performed: the ligature was applied to the stalk, and it was gradually tightened every day. On the fourth day the ligature gave way, and the instrument came off without the tumour: another ligature was now placed in the groove left by the former, and gradually tightened every day. On the fifth day, having made its way completely through the stalk, it came away with the instrument, leaving the tumour loose in the vagina. It was necessary to introduce the whole hand, in order to extract the tumour, which was found to be as large as the head of a new-born child. On examining the vagina a short time afterwards, the neck of the uterus was found in its natural situation, and with its natural orifice. The hæmorrhages ceased, menstruation became regular, the patient rapidly recovered, and has been well ever since.



## IX.

Some years before this case occurred I was consulted, together with two of the most experienced practitioners in London, about a lady who had been long subject to hæmorrhages from the uterus, by which her health had been broken, and in whom a large round tumour had been discovered in the vagina. On examining it carefully, the orifice of the uterus could be felt, the anterior lip of which seemed as if it was prolonged into a thick stalk which terminated in a round tumour. As the stalk was not encircled by the orifice of the uterus, it was thought that it could not be a polypus, and we agreed in dissuading from the application of the ligature. This lady died about two years afterwards. If I had known what I do now about the thick-necked polypus of the lip of the uterus, and that there is a large proportion of removeable polypi, of which the stalk is not encircled by the orifice of the uterus, I would have applied the ligature.

IV. A polypus may have an unusual form, as that of a solid cylinder; it is generally globular or pyriform, with a stalk like an elastic gum bottle; but I have seen two cases in which it was cylindrical, about the size of half the wrist, and the unusual form occasioned great doubts about the nature of the case and the mode of treatment.

## X.

A woman for a long time had suffered frequent hæmorrhages from the uterus, which had resisted the usual remedies and greatly injured her health. At length, one day, a substance of a singular appearance suddenly protruded from the vagina; it hung out beyond the external orifice nearly half a foot; in form it was like a flattened cylinder, about half as thick as the wrist; it felt somewhat like an intestine, but on careful examination was found to have no cavity; it was very soft; on tracing it upwards it was found to extend through the vagina, and through the orifice of the uterus, beyond which it could not be traced; it was firmly attached within, for on pulling at it, it did not come away; it was of the same diameter through its whole length: a ligature was applied to it just below the orifice of the uterus, and in a few days it came away, the patient immediately losing the hæmorrhages by which she had so long been weakened.

V. A polypus is sometimes so small, that it seems incredible it should occasion the frequent hæmorrhages which attend it, yet the

hæmorrhages cease on the removal of the polypus. I have felt them as small as a filbert without its shell, growing to the neck or lip of the uterus; they were so small that, on being touched, they slipped into the orifice of the uterus, and there remained concealed till the finger was withdrawn, and the patient sat up, and they dropped down again into the vagina.

I saw an elderly woman with a polypus of this size: the day was fixed for its removal, but before it arrived, whilst she was using a lotion with a long pewter syringe, it fell away, and from that time the hæmorrhages never returned.

## XI.

Dr. Babington took me into the country one evening with my instrument, to remove a small polypus about the size of a walnut, which he had discovered in a lady the day before. He had described the case to me about a week before, when I advised him to examine the uterus, and said that I thought that he would find a polypus. She was about fifty-five years of age, and for a year and a half had been subject to frequent hæmorrhages from the uterus without pain. We found her in bed, ready for the operation. The polypus was so small, that I took it between my fore and middle fingers, and drew it downwards, on which the stalk broke, and the little polypus came away. Dr. Babington, on examining immediately afterwards, was surprised to find no polypus, on which I showed it him in my hand. From this time the hæmorrhages never returned. These little polypi are generally too small for the ligature; and if they cannot be pulled away with the finger, should be twisted off by a pair of surgeon's dressing forceps.

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### OF EXCRESCENCES FROM THE UTERUS WHICH ARE LIABLE TO BE MISTAKEN FOR POLYPUS.

I will just collect an account of these several excrescences such as I have observed myself, or have been described by competent witnesses, and then see whether, amid this variety of description and of denomination, it is not possible to simplify the subject, and reduce them all to one kind and one name.

'There arise,' says M. Herbiniaux, 'as well in the vagina, as in

‘ the uterus, excrescences which Levret calls vivaces, but which must  
 ‘ not be confounded with polypi; they are fungous excrescences  
 ‘ which grow from ulcerated surfaces, and are covered with no mem-  
 ‘ brane. It is quite useless either to cut them off, or to apply a  
 ‘ ligature, for they soon grow again; they cause little or no pain,  
 ‘ but frequent hæmorrhages, which are ultimately fatal. We com-  
 ‘ monly find several such excrescences at the same time; commonly  
 ‘ they remain always in the uterus, they seldom descend into the  
 ‘ vagina, for they have no stalk; the orifice of the uterus is com-  
 ‘ monly more or less open, and within it can be felt the excrescence;  
 ‘ it is soft, and less even than a polypus; it often distends the uterus  
 ‘ so much, that the abdomen is externally unnaturally large; pressure  
 ‘ on the belly causes pain, but the excrescence itself is void of feel-  
 ‘ ing.’\* I suppose that the following case, which I saw many years  
 ago, is of the kind which is here described by M. Herbiniaux.

## XII.

I was sent for thirty miles from London, to see a lady seventy years of age, who a few weeks before had had a sudden hæmorrhage from the uterus, whilst she was standing in her drawing-room, so that the blood stood in a little pool on the carpet; terrified at this occurrence at her age, she was removed to her bed, where she had remained ever since with a slow discharge, sometimes of blood and sometimes of water. I found the orifice of the uterus circular, with thin edges, dilated to the size of half-a-crown, and a substance slightly protruding through it. It had a rough cauliflower surface, and bled on being touched; it was round and large. I could pass my finger within the orifice, and some way up between the thin walls of the uterus and this globular, spongy body. She complained of violent weight and bearing-down pains in the rectum, which I soon found depended on an enormous collection of hard fæces. This was soon cleared out by the country surgeon who met me, by the aid of a good syringe and some brown soap and water, to the indescribable relief of his patient. The more formidable part of her disease, however, still remained. She came to town, and was attended for some time by Dr. Babington and myself. The tumour never projected enough into the vagina to admit even of its tip end being included in a ligature. After being some months in London, she returned to

\* Richter's Chirurg. Bibliothek. b. 6. s. 218.



the country, and about a year afterwards I heard that she died dropsical. Since this case, I have seen two similar to it. Here, then, is a fungous excrescence, by which I understand one of a vascular structure, which is not covered by a smooth thick membrane, like polypus, but has a rough surface, which grows by a broad base instead of a narrow stalk, which, if removed, grows again, which bleeds on being touched, but which is insensible, and which kills by inducing frequent hæmorrhages.

‘There are polypi,’ continues M. Herbiniaux,\* ‘which are as soft as those called vivaces, but they are smooth; they are the mucous polypi (schleim polypen); they excite hæmorrhages, and if you apply the ligature to them, there arises a discharge of mucus, and the polypus becomes smaller. When it separates, it is nothing but an empty skin.’

The late Dr. John Clarke described one of these tumours under the name of cauliflower excrescence; and Dr. C. M. Clarke has given a clear and forcible description of it in his work on the diseases of females. The following are its most remarkable properties:—Instead of having a smooth surface like a polypus, it is granulated like that of a cauliflower. Instead of being covered with a thick mucous membrane like a polypus, it is covered by a fine transparent one; it is of a bright flesh colour, it is quite insensible, it never grows from any part but the cervix uteri; instead of growing from a narrower part or stalk, it grows from a broad base; it is attended by a watery discharge and by frequent hæmorrhages. It is as liable to occur in young and middle-aged, as in elderly women, and in this respect differs from carcinoma of the uterus. It consists of a collection of small blood-vessels, and in this respect differs from polypus in its internal structure, as well as its external covering. After death it shrinks almost to nothing, so that on examining the body, in place of the tumour which was felt during life, there is found only a soft, flaccid, slimy, whitish substance, which looks like the foetal portion of the placenta of a calf. It undergoes the same change if inclosed in a ligature. It kills, like polypus, by the profuse discharge and frequent hæmorrhages which it occasions. During the progress of the case, small pieces of granulated flesh come away, vast quantities of watery fluid and frequent hæmor-

\* *Traité sur divers Accouchemens laborieux et sur les Polypes de la Matrice.* See Richter's *Chirurg. Bibliothek.* b. 6. s. 218.

rhages, by which the constitution of the patient is slowly undermined.

Compare the chief properties of these two excrescences, the one described by Herbiniaux and Levret, and the other by Dr. Clarke:—

<i>Vivaces.</i>	<i>Cauliflower Excrescences.</i>
A rough surface.	A rough surface.
Grows from a broad base.	Grows from a broad base.
A soft fungus.	A congeries of vessels.
If removed, grows again.	If removed, grows again.
The effect of death not observed.	After death or a ligature, shrinks to an empty skin.
Insensible.	Insensible.
Kills by frequent hæmorrhages.	Kills by frequent hæmorrhages.

By comparing the above parallel columns, the reader will easily see that the essential properties of these two excrescences are almost identical, and that there is no more difference between them than what would naturally arise from two observers describing the same thing: they differ only in the part from which they grow; that is, not more than polypus of the neck and orifice from polypus of the fundus of the uterus.

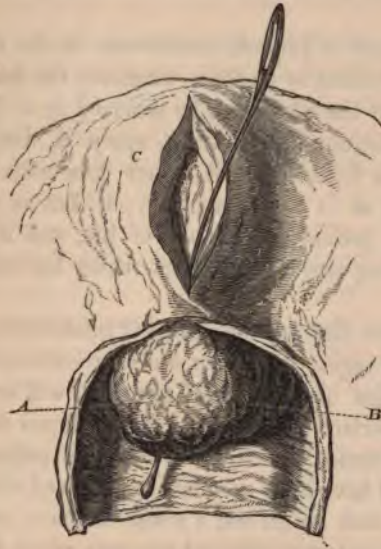
But what is the essential nature of these reproducible excrescences? Are they growths confined to the uterus, or are they only individuals of the same tribe which infest other parts of the body?

In Mr. Brodie's museum there is a preparation of the uterus of a young woman who died in St. James's Infirmary from cancer of the breast. During the progress of the disease, she had a constant discharge from the vagina. The uterus was not examined during life, but after death it was found enlarged and containing a vascular excrescence, which grew from the fundus, and projected into its cavity, and which Mr. Brodie tells me has precisely the appearance of the cauliflower excrescence of the neck of the uterus.

### XIII.

I saw a poor woman in the Middlesex Hospital, of whose case the following are the particulars:—She was thirty-three years of age, a widow, and had not had a child for thirteen years. She had for a long time been subject to leucorrhœa, but, about four months back, this changed into a profuse, parti-coloured, fetid discharge, with slight appearances of blood every few days. About three weeks

ago she had had a violent hæmorrhage, and another since her admission into the hospital. She had slight occasional pains in the loins and thighs. I felt a tumour the size of a small apple; it appeared to grow from the orifice of the uterus, nearly, but not quite, all round, leaving a cleft on one side which admitted the finger. The surface was rough. The probability that this was a malignant excrescence was distinctly recognised by Dr. Ley and myself; but as the only plan which afforded her any chance of recovering, a ligature was applied round the upper part of the tumour and tightened every day; it gave no pain. On the sixth day from its application there came on vomiting and a pulse of 140. The next morning the ligature was removed, the vomiting ceased, but the pulse continued rapid. From this time she continued gradually to sink, and died about four months afterwards. The body was examined by Mr. Herbert Mayo, and I subjoin his account of the dissection, and his sketch of the tumour.



*A*, The fungus of the cervix, with a probe introduced through it from the cavity of the uterus.

*B*, fungus of the same description, growing from the upper and back part of the vagina.

*C*, interior surface of the uterus laid open.



‘The body of the uterus was shrunk, pale, and contracted; the adjoining portion (half an inch) of the cervix was healthy. The last inch in length of the cervix was swollen to the size of a large chestnut, and had the texture of a soft pulpy fungus; a similar structure in the place of one of the ovaries, and in a neighbouring lymphatic gland, left no doubt that the tumour was of the nature fungous hæmatodes.’

The reader will by this time have drawn for himself the following conclusion: that these fungous excrescences described by Levret, Herbiniaux, and Dr. Clarke, which I have found in the uterus and in the vagina, and which agree in these leading properties, that instead of a dense firm substance they are of a spongy or vascular structure; that if removed they grow again, and kill by producing frequent and profuse hæmorrhages; are only the same growth in different parts of the genital cavity, and are specimens of the same disease which, in other parts of the body, is best known in this country under the denomination of the bleeding fungus, or fungous hæmatodes.

In all these cases of fungous excrescence in the vagina, the best practical rule I believe to be this: whenever the form of the excrescence is such that the whole can be removed by a ligature, without including any portion of the uterus, apply it, distinctly stating to the patient or her friends that it is not done with the same confidence of success as in a common polypus, but as the only remedy which gives the patient any chance of life, and if it fails by the excrescence growing again it does not render the case worse than it was before.

I do not believe that any man can tell infallibly by touch whether a tumour on the vagina is a malignant excrescence, which is to grow again, or a benign one, which, if removed, will never return. A rough uneven surface is no test. The polypus described in Case No. III, which turned out to be a common polypus in structure, and which would have been successfully removed if the ligature had been applied an inch lower, had a rough surface; and I have successfully and permanently removed tumours, which because they had uneven surfaces, had been judged by other practitioners to be malignant excrescences. It is a prevalent notion among medical men, that these malignant excrescences are far more common than they really are. Among the cases about which I am consulted, especially from the country, in which disease of structure is apprehended in

the uterus, no one is so often named as the cauliflower excrescence. If the surface of the tumour or even the neck of the uterus is a little irregular, if blood follows an examination, and the patient states that she has a watery discharge, by which she means little more than that it is colourless, all which are common occurrences in the diseases of structure in this organ, the case is sure to be set down as cauliflower excrescence. If these suspicions were accurate, this disease would be the most common of the diseases of this organ ; yet the fact is, that it is the most rare. Where we see one case of cauliflower excrescence, we see ten or even twenty of common polypus and fifty of carcinoma, or malignant ulcer of the uterus.

## CHAPTER V.

## OF THE IRRITABLE UTERUS.

THE disease which I have ventured to call the irritable uterus, is a painful and tender state of this organ, neither attended by, nor tending to produce, change in its structure. It is now between fifteen and twenty years since I began to notice this disease, and since then I have seen several cases every year. At first it puzzled me much; I had not seen it described in books. I took it for chronic inflammation, which would end in disorganization, probably of a malignant kind; but experience, whilst it taught me that it was a very intractable disease, taught me also that it was not a disorganizing one. I became familiar with its obstinacy and less apprehensive about its result, for I know cases which have lasted upwards of ten years, in which the structure of the uterus is as unaltered here as it was in the beginning of the disease, as far at least as can be determined by examination during life. Although I often find it still an intractable disease, and wish I had a shorter and surer mode of cure to communicate, yet I think it worth describing, that practitioners may recognise it when they meet with it; that they may know what they are to expect in obstinacy, and what they need not apprehend in the result; what will do harm, what will do good, and the mode of treatment, which, however unsatisfactory to the medical attendant and his patient, will slowly but ultimately conduct most cases to recovery.

Pain in the lowest part of the abdomen and loins attends various diseases of the unimpregnated uterus. It is the chief symptom in painful menstruation; but here it occurs only during the menstrual period, and is quite absent during the rest of the month. It is the most distressing symptom in the descent of the uterus (prolapsus) but here it occurs only in the upright posture and exercise, ceases on lying down, and replacing the organ, and is prevented by supporting it in its natural situation. It attends most of the diseases of structure to which the uterus is liable; but the change of struc-



ture, which may be ascertained by examination, distinguishes the nature of the pain.

A patient who is suffering from the irritable uterus complains of pain in the lowest part of the abdomen, along the brim of the pelvis, and often also in the loins. The pain is worse when she is up and taking exercise, and less when she is at rest in the horizontal posture; in this respect it resembles that of prolapsus uteri, but there is this difference, that in the latter, if the patient lies down, she soon becomes quite easy; but in the complaint of which I am speaking, the recumbent posture, although it diminishes, does not remove the pain. It is always present in some degree, and severe paroxysms often occur, although the patient has been recumbent for a long time. If the uterus is examined, it is found to be exquisitely tender; the finger can be introduced into the vagina, and pressed against its sides without causing uneasiness; but as soon as it reaches and is pressed against the uterus, it gives exquisite pain. This tenderness, however, varies at different times, according to the degree of pain which has been latterly experienced. The neck and body of the uterus feels slightly swollen, but this condition also exists in different degrees, sometimes sufficiently manifest, sometimes scarcely or not at all perceptible. Excepting, however, this tenderness, and occasionally this swelling, or rather tension, the uterus feels perfectly natural in structure; there is no evidence of scirrhus in the neck, the orifice is not misshapen, its edges are not indurated. The patient, finding her pain greatly increased by rising and walking, soon learns to relieve herself by lying on the sofa, and at length spends nearly her whole time there. Notwithstanding this precaution, there is always a considerable degree of uneasiness, but this frequently increases to severe pain. These paroxysms generally come on either a few days before menstruation, or (as is the case in many instances) a few days afterwards. If the paroxysm is properly treated, it subsides in a few days to the ordinary and more moderate uneasiness. Whilst this uneasiness is felt in the substance of the uterus, the general circulation is but little disturbed. The pulse is soft, and not much quicker than is natural; but it is easily quickened by the slightest emotion. In a few instances, however, there has been a greater and more permanent excitement of the general circulation; the degree in which the health has been reduced has been different in different cases. A patient, who was originally delicate, who has suffered long, and has used much depleting treatment, has

been (as might reasonably be expected) the most reduced; she has grown thin, pale, weak, and nervous; menstruation often continues regular, but sometimes diminishes, or ceases altogether; the functions of the stomach and bowels are not more interrupted than might be expected from the loss of air and exercise; the appetite is not good, and the bowels require aperients; yet nothing more surely occasions a paroxysm of pain than an active purgative. Such are the leading symptoms of this distressing complaint. To embody them in one view, let the reader fancy to himself a young or middle-aged woman, somewhat reduced in flesh and health, almost living on her sofa for months, or even years, from a constant pain in the uterus, which renders her unable to sit up and take exercise; the uterus, on examination, unchanged in structure, but exquisitely tender; even in the recumbent posture always in pain, but subject to great aggravations more or less frequently.

The causes to which this disease has been attributed, and after the application of which it has occurred, are generally considerable bodily exertions at times when the uterus is in a susceptible state. In one patient it came on after an enormous walk during a menstrual period; in another, it was occasioned by the patient's going a-shooting with her husband not many days after an abortion; in a third, it came on after standing for several hours many successive nights at concerts and parties; in a fourth, it originated in a journey in a rough carriage over the paved roads of France; in a fifth, it was attributed either to cold or an astringent lotion, by which a profuse lochia was suddenly stopped, followed by intense pain in the uterus; in a sixth it occurred soon after, and apparently in consequence of, matrimony. Although, however, the disease followed, and was apparently excited by, these several causes of irritation, yet the patients had previously manifested signs of predisposition to it; they were all sensitive in body and mind, many of them had been previously subject to the ordinary form of painful menstruation. The disease seemed to consist in a state of the uterus similar to that of painful menstruation, only permanent instead of occasional.

Long-continued pain in an organ so liable to malignant diseases, invariably leads to the apprehension of disease of structure, to ascertain which, repeated examinations generally take place, but nothing is discovered excepting exquisite tenderness and slight swelling, or rather tension. The disease does not terminate in change of structure. The fact, also, that many of these cases, after having lasted

for years, end in entire recovery, is a sufficient proof that it is a disease only of function. Few such diseases, however, yield so slowly to remedies. Even in those which end in complete recovery, there are often long intervals in which the progress towards amendment is most unsatisfactory and dispiriting. By complete repose in the recumbent posture, and proper remedies, the painful paroxysms become slighter and return at longer intervals; the stationary uneasiness becomes gradually less, and at length ceases altogether, and at the end of a few months the patient is left free from pain, but more or less enfeebled. No disease, however, is so liable to relapse. The patient, feeling easy, finding herself feeble, and supposing that air and exercise are necessary to the recovery of her health, rises and goes about again, and after a short interval of caution, throws aside her fears, engages in walks, drives, and gaiety, or takes a journey to the sea, for the recovery of her health. This conduct commonly occasions a complete relapse, and the patient and her attendant are again involved in their former suffering, apprehensions, and difficulties.

What is the nature of this disease? It is not acute inflammation, for that would run a far shorter course, and end in certain known consequences. It is not chronic inflammation, for that is a disorganizing process, and slowly but surely alters the structure of the organ in which it goes on. Both in chronic inflammation, and in the disease which I am describing, there is a morbid state of the nerves indicated by pain, and sometimes at least a morbid state of the blood-vessels indicated by their fulness; but the substances effused by chronic inflammation show, that in this there is something additional in the actions, and consequently in the state of the vessels. The disease which I am describing resembles a state which other organs are subject to, and which in them is denominated irritation. Thus surgeons describe what they call an irritable tumour of the breast.\* It is exquisitely tender; an ungentle examination of the part leaves pain for hours; it is always in pain, but this is greatly increased every month immediately before the menstrual period. Although apprehensions are entertained of cancer, it never terminates in disease of structure. It is represented as a very common disease. Mr Brodie describes a similar state of the joints.† It occurs chiefly amongst hysterical females; it is attended by pain,

\* See Sir A. Cooper on Diseases of the Female Breast.

† Brodie on Diseases of the Joints, p. 338.



at first without any tumefaction, but the pain increases and is attended with a puffy, diffused, but trifling swelling; the part is exceedingly tender; this assemblage of symptoms lasting a long time, and being often a little relieved by remedies, occasions a great anxiety, but there never arises any ultimate bad 'consequences.' 'The disease,' says Mr. Brodie, 'appears to depend on a morbid condition of the nerves, and may be regarded as a local hysteric affection.' These painful states of the breast and of the joints appear to be similar to that which I have been describing in the uterus; similar in the kinds of constitutions which they attack; similar in pain; in exquisite tenderness; in resemblance to the commencement of organic disease, and in proving ultimately to be only diseases of function.

The mode of treatment which I have found most useful, (tardy as it may be in efficacy in most cases, and vain as it has been in some,) consists, 1st, in subduing pain; 2d, in restoring the general health. The difficulty is to know when to discontinue the former indication, and when to aim at the latter: whilst aiming at the former, to select and proportion the means to the circumstances of the case; when aiming at the latter, to take care not to occasion a relapse of the pain by the means employed for the restoration of the health. The remedies for subduing pain, are the horizontal posture, narcotics, warm hip baths, occasional local bleeding, to which may sometimes be added mercury and counter-irritants.

In all those cases in which the pain is perpetual, repose should be perpetual. The patient must abstain not only from foot and carriage exercise, but from the upright posture, which even for short intervals is often sufficient to counteract the cure. As soon as she is dressed in the morning, she should be placed on her sofa with her shoulders as low as the pelvis, and in that posture remain the whole day. At first it is tedious, but she soon learns to amuse and occupy herself in this position, to write, read, work, and draw. This posture more or less strictly observed (the degree of strictness being soon taught by the sensations of the patient) is absolutely necessary for the completion of the cure, not only till all pain has ceased, but for some time afterwards, and even then must be relinquished with the utmost caution, or rather timidity.

II. The next measure is to draw blood.—When the general circulation is undisturbed, as is most frequently the case, local blood-letting is preferable to general, giving more relief and occasioning

less weakness. Cupping affords decidedly more relief than leeches. The most convenient part for the application of the glasses is the upper part of the sacrum, but I have often found them more efficacious when applied to the part to which the pain is referred. Leeches afford more relief when applied to the hæmorrhoidal vessels, or between the labia pudenda, than to the loins, or the lower part of the abdomen. The quantity drawn must depend on circumstances; the best guides are the state of the constitution, the duration of the disease, and the relief afforded. The less the constitution is injured, and the shorter the duration of the disease, the larger ought to be the bloodletting, because the less likely it is to be injurious, and the more likely it is completely to remove the pain; on the contrary, when the disease has lasted long, and the patient is much emaciated and enfeebled, the more likely is it to be injurious, and the less likely it is to extinguish the pain; hence the bloodletting ought to be moderate. These, however, like all general rules, admit of exceptions. Twelve ounces of blood is a large local bloodletting; it seldom requires to be repeated to the same amount; I have known four ounces afford all the relief which this remedy was capable of effecting. But the pain, if only diminished, will increase; and if removed, will return sooner or later. The bloodletting, therefore, requires to be repeated; and the question is, whether to defer it until the return or increase of the pain, or to anticipate this return or increase. I think the latter is preferable when the period of recurrence can be nearly calculated; both reason and experience show that a mode of treatment which prevents an organ from resuming its morbid action, is more likely to remove it permanently, than one which permits the action to recur, and then removes it: the subsequent bleedings, however, ought not to be so large as the first, and as it may be necessary to repeat these several times, it is important to discover the minimum of blood which will afford relief.

In determining the extent and the frequency of the bloodlettings, not only the pain, but the state of the constitution ought to be taken into the account. When they afford decided relief to the part, and inflict no material injury on the constitution, their propriety is unquestionable; but in many cases, after the disease has lasted long, and the body is emaciated and enfeebled, the relief afforded by bloodletting is so slight and temporary, and the debility it occasions is so great, that it must be discontinued altogether. The next remedy which I have mentioned is a narcotic. Of such

medicines, the most useful are, one-third camphor and two-thirds extract of henbane, or hemlock, or poppy, divided into pills of five grains, of which one may be taken two or three times a day, or about ten grains of extract of poppy, dissolved in an ounce of gruel, may be injected into the rectum every day, immediately after the bowels have acted. The solution of poppy, if retained, remains in the rectum till the next evacuation of the bowels, and until that time seldom ceases to soothe. If, however, this should not be the case, the injection may be repeated during the day, and as it is removed every time the bowels are evacuated, should always be replaced by another injection.

Want of exercise and narcotics almost always occasion constipation, which requires aperient medicines, but these must be of the most unirritating kind. A purgative sufficiently active to operate several times, almost always aggravates the pain, and a long course of such medicines, which I have sometimes seen employed from the belief of disorder in the liver, has produced great and long-continued mischief. That is the best aperient which will act only once plentifully and without pain; and those which have most frequently acted in this way have been the solution of sulphate of magnesia in infusion of roses, castor oil, electuary of senna, sulphur. Of one of these, enough to produce the effect which I have described should be taken every other day.

The horizontal posture, small local bloodlettings, and narcotics, are the remedies most invariably useful, and to which, after a long illness, and the vain trial of other remedies, I have most frequently been obliged to attribute all the good that had been done. There are others, however, sufficiently efficacious to deserve to be known and tried.

One is warm bathing; the hip-bath, at the temperature of 96°, for half an hour, every or every other night, is sometimes very efficacious; at other times it affords no perceptible relief, and greatly increases the languor and debility; but the kind of warm bathing which affords most relief, and occasions least debility, is the partial steam bath; the flannel sack should be drawn up to the præcordia, so as to enclose the abdomen and lower extremities, and these may be exposed to the action of the steam for half an hour every other day.

Another remedy is a mild dose of mercury; from three to five grains of blue pill, or compound calomel pill, mixed with five grains of extract of henbane, taken every night for several weeks, or every



other night for many weeks, have sometimes, without affecting the gums, occasioned a very regular action of the bowels; and during its influence, the periodical aggravations of pain have not recurred, and the permanent pain has diminished, and at length ceased altogether. Whilst the mercury has had this favourable influence over the local disease, it has occasioned no material injury to the constitution. This has been its effect chiefly when the health has not been much reduced, and the disease has not lasted very long. On the contrary, in other cases, in which the body has been previously debilitated and emaciated, mercury, although it had a favourable influence over the local disease, occasioned so much wasting, weakness and nervousness, as to compel me to discontinue it. Mercury requires to be employed with the utmost circumspection, and its effects in each individual case ought to determine whether it should be persisted in or discontinued.

Another remedy, which is often useful, is external irritation: this may be produced either by small blisters, the size of a watch, allowed to heal, and then renewed, and so on for many successive blisters; or a caustic issue may be made the size of a dollar, dressed with savin ointment, and slightly touched once or twice a week with lunar caustic. The best place for the issue is the upper part of the sacrum; the best place for the blisters is the seat of the pain. These artificial irritations, however, in sensitive constitutions, sometimes excite great disturbance without any equivalent benefit, and ought to be employed with caution, especially the caustic issue.

The practitioner can do no harm, and must do good as long as he confines himself to the employment of the recumbent posture, mild narcotics, warm hip-baths, and unirritating aperients; but with bloodletting and mercury he must be more cautious. I have seen many cases in which the pain was rather aggravated than relieved by bleeding; the patient rendered weak and irritable, and the effect of the remedy was unmixed injury; in the employment, therefore, of such remedies as bleeding and mercury, the intelligent practitioner will, after a little time, be better guided by his own experience of the case than by any general directions. It is a good rule in the treatment of all diseases, whether acute or chronic, when the remedies are affording little benefit, when the constitution rather than the disease seems to be yielding under them, to desist from them; this is a rule of common sense above the rules of art, and to which the latter ought to be subservient. I know no man whose knowledge

of his profession is so exact, and whose opinion of a case is so infallible, that he may dispense with this rule.

Lastly, there is a stage or class of these cases which is chiefly benefited by restorative means, especially chalybeate waters. When the disease has lasted long, is not relieved by the above treatment, is accompanied by broken health, cold extremities, and a pale complexion, I have often known the disease cured by the waters of Tunbridge Wells or Bath; the patient gradually losing her pain, regaining the power of sitting up and going about, and acquiring a more healthy appearance. The plan, however, requires great caution, for where the jar of a carriage brings on pain, the journey will often do great mischief; and the chalybeate waters, which in some cases are so efficacious, are in others clearly pernicious. The probable effect of a journey may be known by a few drives, and the effect of the waters ought to be carefully watched; their influence on the pain and on the pulse is the best guide.

I have thus described the best remedies with which I am acquainted for the treatment of this distressing and often intractable complaint. In my hands the result has been, that some who had been previously ill for several years, recovered after a few months, and continued well, by strictly avoiding for a long time the exciting causes. Others, after a far longer treatment, experienced the same recovery; and this recovery was rendered permanent by the same long-continued caution; others, on the contrary, after sooner or later recovering, have laid aside caution, indulged in unrestrained exercise and exertion, and have experienced a relapse as severe and tedious as the original attack. Lastly, in some cases my best efforts have alleviated but not removed the disease; and I have had the mortification to see them, at the end of several years, little better than they were at the beginning. The older I grow, however, the fewer instances do I see of this hopeless condition of the disease; and some of which I had begun to despair, have slowly but ultimately recovered. I think it an important fact, that in the cases which remained uncured after many years, the patients had, for the relief of their pain, gradually accustomed themselves to a daily enormous allowance of opium.

Thus have I endeavoured to give a general description of this disease, which I have ventured to denominate the irritable uterus; but as general descriptions, though comprehensive, are deficient in distinctness, I will relate a few cases as specimens of this disease.

## I.

A lady came to London and placed herself under my care, giving me a written narrative of which the following is an abridgment. It affords a good instance of the duration of these cases, of their liability to relapse, of the fears which they occasion of disease of structure, of the groundlessness of these fears, of the imprudence of patients, notwithstanding repeated suffering, and after years of illness, of their ultimate recovery.

Mrs. ——— is now thirty-six years of age; from sixteen she suffered pain at every menstrual period, but in other respects was healthy and rather plump. At twenty-four she married, and after her first confinement went to a fashionable watering-place, and there passed a winter of laborious gaiety, her mornings being spent in making calls, and her evenings standing in crowded parties. She lost her appetite, suffered much from languor, and became subject to shooting pains at the lowest part of the abdomen. One day she went on an excursion into the country, during which she was compelled to hold her urine for six hours. In the evening she took a long walk, towards the end of which she was seized with severe pain and weight in the lowest part of the abdomen, and a sense of fulness in the womb. She applied leeches, lived low, and was confined to her sofa several weeks, at the end of which time she was supposed to be well; but when she attempted to walk or ride she felt a return of the pain; nevertheless she took a journey of forty miles, during which she suffered much: the pain was always worse at the menstrual period. Whilst in this state of imperfect recovery she took a drive in a donkey-cart, which was followed by a violent relapse, with great pain and tenderness across the lowest part of the abdomen. She was now confined to her bed, and was bled from the arm four times in one week. At the end of eight weeks she removed from her bed to the sofa, and in three weeks more went out in her carriage and soon afterwards travelled to ———. She suffered pain during the journey, was not so well on her arrival, and consulted Mr. ———, who examined the uterus, which he described as enlarged and tender.

The narrative now goes on to recount a succession of relapses, all brought on by bodily exertion or agitation, when in a state of imperfect recovery; one by the jolting of a carriage in a long journey, another by driving in a rough donkey-cart, another by cantering for a full hour one day when the weather was fine, and she in high spirits,



another by yielding to the solicitations of her friends, who assured her that she ailed nothing, and pressed to exert herself to the utmost, and live like other people. This was to make daily calls from one o'clock to half-past four, up and down the steep streets of ———, and going to parties in the evening, where she stood most of the time. For the attacks of pain the principal remedies were strict rest in the recumbent posture for several weeks, and bloodletting, either general or local. On one occasion she was bled from the arm four times in one week; twice she became pregnant, and was delivered prematurely of children who had died some time before their birth. The uterus was often examined, and was always found to be tender, sometimes enlarged; on the last examination some irregularity was felt in the neck of the uterus, which led to apprehensions of disease of structure. Tired of remedies which had afforded such temporary benefit, she continued twelve months without any medical attendant, using no means excepting rest, occasionally going out, but at the end of this time she was not better; her pulse was full and quick, her pain worse, and subject to periodical aggravations. These attacks came on with, first, low spirits, then shivering, followed by sickness, head-ache and throbbing pain of the uterus. Nothing relieved them but leeches; she was always the worse for carriage exercise, and for anxiety of mind. She now set off for London in a horizontal carriage; on her journey she met her former medical attendant, who had not seen her for many months, and who acknowledged that she was not better than she had been eighteen months before; she therefore pursued her journey to London and placed herself under my care. I found nothing unnatural in the form or consistence of the neck of the uterus, excepting a very slight irregularity in its orifice, which I have often observed in patients who ultimately recovered; but it was exquisitely tender, and the increased pain occasioned by the pressure of the finger lasted several hours. She had always some dull uneasiness along the anterior brim of the pelvis; but once every week or ten days she had a greater degree of pain, which generally lasted several days, and when it ceased left behind the ordinary and more moderate uneasiness. She was not deficient in flesh or complexion, her pulse was always about 90, full and strong. After two bleedings of twelve ounces each, which produced excessive languor, without abating the pain, or the disturbance of circulation, she took a grain of calomel and five grains of extract

of henbane twice daily. In about ten days her gums became sore, and continued so for several weeks; immediately the disturbance of the circulation ceased; the pulse was slow and soft, and never resumed its former excitement. The pain likewise became considerably less, and the paroxysms came on at longer intervals; when they did, they were relieved by cupping, and by solutions of extract of poppy injected into the rectum, immediately after the bowels were moved. For a long time her plan of treatment consisted in strict confinement to the horizontal posture, a daily dose of sulphate of magnesia, just enough to excite one plentiful action of the bowels, and no more; and then a small poppy clyster, with an occasional cupping. I have not room, and it would be tedious, to relate the whole progress of this case: it is enough to say, that the permanent uneasiness gradually became less, and that the paroxysms of pain became seldomer and slighter; after both the one and the other appeared to have ceased altogether, there were occasional returns of pain, which showed that the disease was not eradicated. After these symptoms had entirely ceased, she continued for many months the same plan with the exception of the bloodletting. At length she was removed in a horizontal carriage a little way out of London; here, having learnt prudence from her former relapses, and having no relations about her to urge her to exertions, she began to make gradual, even timid, attempts to sit up and walk about. At first she walked with a watch in her hand; the first day for a very few minutes, adding one minute every day to the length of her walk. When at home she generally reclined on her sofa, sitting up only at meals, or for a short time. At the end of the month of this cautious exercise, her health, which had become feebler, was greatly improved; she has been living most cautiously ever since, and has now been perfectly well nearly two years.

This case was written out three years ago; the patient has had no recurrence of her disease, although she has since sustained a heavy and lasting affliction. She is in good health and can walk, drive, ride, and live like other people; but she has never since been pregnant.

## II.

Miss ———, twenty-five years of age, had a constitution naturally delicate and sensitive; and this had been increased by nursing her sister during a long and alarming illness. She had been subject to painful menstruation for several years. In this state of



health, she was one day during a menstrual period almost incessantly on foot for many hours, calling on acquaintances and searching for a lodging-house. In the evening of the same day she was seized with severe pain in the lowest part of the abdomen, extending from groin to groin, along the brim of the pelvis, and in the loins. Rest, fomentations, opiates, purgatives, and leeches were employed ; but although they diminished, they did not remove the pain. Weeks and months elapsed, and notwithstanding the indefatigable attention of a very intelligent physician, the pain still continued ; she was unable to sit up without aggravating it, and was greatly reduced in health. After nearly twelve months of disappointed expectations and unsuccessful treatment, she was put into one of those horizontal carriages which the London coach-makers let out for the conveyance of invalids, and brought up to town, a distance of about sixty miles. The jolting of the carriage gave her much pain, so that when she arrived in town she was suffering more than she had done for many weeks. I then saw her for the first time in consultation with the physician who had attended her throughout her illness, and with a London physician. She was at this time completely confined to her bed ; she was so much emaciated that I could encircle her arm with my thumb and middle finger, her complexion was like white wax, she had a constant uneasiness in the lowest part of the abdomen and groins ; but every few days she had an attack of what she called her spasms, which she described in the following way : in the lowest part of the abdomen, or a little lower even than that, internally, she felt first a sense of heat, to this was speedily added a sense of throbbing, then a sense of distension, as if there was a tumour within, which gradually expanded till it felt ready to burst, then began the spasms ; these she described as shootings or electric shocks, darting from the tumour up into the abdomen : they recurred every five or ten minutes, making her start with such violence as to shake the bed. I have been in the adjoining room when she has been in this state, and have perceived the shock ; between the spasms, she felt what she called a convulsive pain. Nothing relieved these spasms but a small local bloodletting ; she used fomentations, simple and medicated, for many hours ; hip-baths ; opium, in draughts and in injections, without relief ; but as soon as four or six leeches were applied and had drawn blood, the spasms, distension, throbbing, and heat, speedily subsided, leaving behind the dull permanent uneasiness. The uterus was so tender that the examination of it was torture, and left severe



suffering for many hours. Menstruation had ceased for some months, her appetite was capricious, and required tempting by savoury and unwholesome food; ham and pork were her favourite meats. Of every meal she brought up a portion, her bowels never acted without medicine, yet medicine never acted without aggravating her pain. Her pulse was small, weak, quick, and easily quickened by the slightest emotion. If anything agitated her, it was so quick and sharp as to resemble the pulse of inflammation, yet in a few minutes it would subside to the ordinary state. She had profuse leucorrhœa. As her spasms recurred twice and often three times in a week, and the leeches were applied equally often, they were employed upon an average about ten times a month, and if the quantity of blood drawn at each time is estimated at two ounces, she must have lost about twenty ounces every month. All this while she was taking little nutriment, and of that a large portion was rejected. The paleness of the blood, and the marble colour of her face and skin, showed how the circulating fluid had been drained of its red particles. Such was the condition in which she was when she arrived in town, nearly twelve months from the commencement of her illness. I continued to attend her for many months, with occasional consultations with some of the most eminent physicians of London. Dr. Baillie saw her repeatedly. When talking about the probability of recovery, he said, that he knew a lady who had been confined to her sofa by a similar state for thirty years. I have not room to tell the various persons who were consulted about her, and the various remedies which were tried for relief; every attempt was made by diet and medicine to remove the irritable state of her stomach; many months elapsed and no advance had been made towards amendment. One day, after an attack of spasms, and the application of leeches, which on this occasion were larger, and bled more profusely than usual, she sunk into a state which led her attendants to think that she was dying. She lay motionless and insensible, her extremities were cold, her pulse was like a thread, and often quite imperceptible; in this state she lay four hours: when she revived she talked incoherently, and could not see. In this state she continued for nearly two days. In describing it, she says, 'Those days are to me as though I was not alive.' We warmed her limbs, gave her nutriment, and diluted wine, and at length she recovered her sight and collectedness of mind. From this time her spasms ceased, but she was in a wretched state from fretfulness of temper and sleepless nights, and she insisted on

being removed to a more quiet spot, notwithstanding the fear that the motion of the carriage might occasion a return of her spasms. The jolting of the carriage gave her great pain, and the next day the spasms recurred: they continued to recur for several weeks, about once in five or six days, but at length they ceased. She now began slowly to recover her appetite, her food was no longer returned, her bowels were moved by milder aperients: she had colliquative perspirations and sleepless nights; for these the tepid salt shower bath was used at bed-time with great and immediate benefit; at this time she took a light preparation of steel twice daily, that is, a drachm of steel wine with equal parts of infusion of quassia and cinnamon water; her pulse became slower and fuller, and a little colour began to be visible on her cheek; she passed part of the day in the drawing-room, sat up and loitered about the garden; it was the beginning of summer: the compound steel mixture was substituted for the steel wine. Whilst taking it she began to menstruate after an interval of twenty months, and from that time did so with perfect regularity. I need not pursue the case further in detail. It is enough to say, that her disease has never returned, and that although her health is not robust, and requires prudence, especially with regard to gaiety and exercise, she looks well, and is able to partake in most of the pleasures and pursuits of life.

Some will think that this disease has been obstinate in my hands, because it was not treated with sufficient activity, and that if blood-letting had been carried further it would have been cured more speedily and surely; but these cases are so protracted that they are seldom submitted to only one practitioner. Most of those which I have seen had already passed through the hands of several. In some, active bloodletting had already done its best and its worst. I have seen patients labouring under this disease made to live entirely on vegetable food, cupped every week, and purged frequently: the result was, that they became pale, thin, and weak; the pain, it is true, was diminished, but not more than it usually is by the recumbent posture, and gentler remedies, and at the end of several months the health was formidably reduced, and the disease not relieved in an adequate degree; but the lovers of large bleedings will ask, would they not have effected more? In answer to this question, I will relate to them a case in which this practice was employed under the most favourable circumstances, that is, when the disease had lasted only a few weeks.

## III.

The patient was a young married woman, twenty-five years of age, who had borne four dead children. After the last, when she began to get about again, she felt pain in the pelvis, which was attributed to prolapsus uteri, and for which she wore a pessary. This was followed by a hæmorrhage, which at length stopped, and was succeeded by pain in the hypogastric and left iliac regions; her pulse was described to be small and wiry, a very common pulse after hæmorrhages from the uterus. She was now blooded four times in less than a week, making in all eighty ounces, and a number of leeches were applied repeatedly to the hypogastrium. I saw her a few weeks afterwards: her face and lips were bloodless, her health broken, and she had the local symptoms which I have denominated the irritable uterus, namely, uneasiness in the hypogastrium and iliac regions, so much increased by sitting up and walking about as to compel her to confine herself entirely to the recumbent posture. During examination the pressure of the finger gave no pain till it reached the neck of the uterus, which was exquisitely tender, and the increased pain, occasioned by pressing it, remained for many hours. A far better mode of bleeding actively, so as to reach the disease, is one employed by Mr. Fernandez, of Lamb's Conduit-street: when the disease is recent, when the health is unimpaired, and the symptoms are more active than they commonly are in the protracted cases, he has employed cupping till it has produced faintness, with great success. This gentleman was the first person whom I ever met with who had recognised the disease which I am describing. It had been an object of his attention for several years before I had noticed it, and he had written a paper about it, which had been read at some medical society, I believe the Westminster; but his experience chiefly lay among the recent cases, whereas I have chiefly seen the protracted form of the disease. It was from him I learnt the efficacy of mild courses of mercury in a certain state, or a certain class of these cases.

Some of my readers will think that the name which I have given to this disease is a verbal refinement, and that I had better have called it chronic inflammation; but I have two objections to this: one is, that chronic inflammation, though a slower, is as surely a disorganizing process as acute inflammation, but this is not. Besides, ought the irritable breast described by Sir Astley Cooper, the hysteric disease of the knee described by Mr. Brodie, and the irritable testicle



well known to practical surgeons—ought these to be called chronic inflammation? they are of the same family as the irritable uterus. The other objection is, that the name would be a mischievous one; many men remember the name of a disease only, and forget the history of it, and the term chronic inflammation would lead to a more indiscriminate and active employment of antiphlogistic remedies than is advisable in the protracted cases. Even the benefit afforded by small local bleedings is not uniform; in some cases the pain is worse after bleeding, in some the pain is most severe a few days before menstruation, when the vessels of the uterus are most distended; in others, on the contrary, the pain is worse after menstruation, when the vessels of the uterus are most drained; in some the uterus feels a little swollen, in others not so: it is probable, therefore, that the cases which I comprehend under the term 'irritable uterus,' may require to be subdivided into several classes, in one of which congestion is an essential part, and bloodletting and mercury may be apt remedies; in another congestion may be absent, and bloodletting and mercury may be useless and pernicious; restorative means, especially steel, being the aptest remedies. Lastly, another may consist of those interminable cases which nothing relieves, and which, at the end of ten or fifteen years, are as bad as they were at the beginning: in these there may be some disease of structure in part of the uterus out of reach of examination by touch.

## CHAPTER V.

## A PECULIAR FORM OF HÆMORRHAGE FROM THE UTERUS.

HÆMORRHAGE from the uterus, after delivery, is attributed to insufficient contraction of that organ. We infer that there is no danger of hæmorrhage if the uterus is contracted; and that the uterus is contracted, if it feels small, round, and firm. This I believe to be, generally, the truth; yet the observing practitioner must have been frequently struck by the little proportion that existed between the want of contraction and the degree of hæmorrhage; having found the uterus bulky without any hæmorrhage, and a profuse hæmorrhage without greater bulk of uterus. Nay, further, I have witnessed a profuse hæmorrhage though the uterus had contracted in the degree which commonly indicates security; and I have ventured to do what is seldom justifiable, separate the placenta before the uterus had contracted without more hæmorrhage than after a common labour. What is this circumstance which has so great an influence that its presence can cause a moderately contracted uterus to bleed profusely, and its absence can cause an uncontracted uterus to bleed scarcely at all?

After delivery, the contraction of the uterus prevents hæmorrhage, by occasioning a sufficient closure of the blood-vessels to resist the ordinary force of the circulation. It appears reasonable to suppose, however, that if the force of the circulation was extraordinarily great it would be able to overcome the ordinary closure of the orifices, and that thus a profuse hæmorrhage might arise although the uterus was contracted in the ordinary degree. That this event, so probable in point of reason, is true in point of fact, was first fully disclosed to me by the following case:—

April 10, 1815, I delivered Mrs. S. W. of her second child; for many hours before the accession of labour she was flushed, and had a very full quick pulse. Abstinence from meat, wine, and warm drinks, a cool room, and a saline purgative, diminished, but did not remove, this state of the circulation, which continued, in a consider-

able degree, when the child was born : it was expelled very gradually, and after the removal of the placenta the uterus felt in the hypogastrium contracted in the ordinary degree ; nevertheless, about twenty minutes afterwards there came one of the most frightful hæmorrhages I ever witnessed ; by the introduction of the hand, and the application of cold, however, it was speedily arrested.

It was somewhat more than a year afterwards when she informed me that she was pregnant again, and coming to town to lie in. As she arrived only two or three days before she fell in labour, I did not see her till she was taken ill ; but then, as soon as I entered her chamber, I was struck on observing the same state of circulation that had preceded her former labour : she was sitting in her easy chair, with a red face, and a throbbing pulse. I had not been many minutes in the room before the pains became so strong it was necessary to put her on the bed, and soon afterwards the child was born ; it could not be expelled more gradually ; after the head was born another pain expelled the shoulders, another the body, and another the limbs. I cut the cord, placed my hand on the abdomen, and felt the uterus contracting in the usual degree, yet a few minutes afterwards the blood burst out with prodigious impetuosity. The fearful scene which followed, I need not depict ; it is enough to state, that by the introduction of the hand, and the application of cold, the hæmorrhage was speedily suppressed ; yet it bleached her face, and for many days she could not sit up without faintness.

I had now witnessed two labours in the same person, in which, though the uterus contracted in the ordinary degree, profuse hæmorrhage had nevertheless occurred ; let me be understood—after the birth of the child, I laid my hand on the abdomen, and felt the uterus within, of the size and hardness which is generally unattended by, and precludes hæmorrhage ; in both instances the labour had been attended by excessively full and rapid circulation. I could easily understand that a contraction of the uterus, which would preclude hæmorrhage in the ordinary state of the circulation, might be insufficient to prevent it during this violent action of the blood-vessels, and the inference I drew, was, that in this case the hæmorrhage depended, not on the want of contraction of the uterus, but on want of tranquillity of the circulation, and that if ever she became pregnant again, a mode of treatment which would cause her to fall in labour with a cool skin and a quiet pulse, would be the best means of preventing a recurrence of the accident.



It was not very long before I had an opportunity of trying the truth of my doctrine, and the efficacy of my treatment; for about twelve months after this confinement, she called on me to tell me that in about four months she should require my attendance again.

The plan I advised was this: to avoid fermented liquors; to take meat only thrice a week; a purgative of salts and senna twice a week; a scruple of nitre three times a day: this she began two months before she expected to be confined, and continued it up to the full time. I saw her when she was expecting her labour every hour, and had the satisfaction to find her with a cool skin, and a soft pulse under eighty. She was to lie in at her own house, a few miles from town; I was to attend her there; for fear I should not arrive in time, the neighbouring surgeon was to be in the house. I was sent for four days afterwards; when I arrived she was not delivered; but I was mortified to find that since our last interview her pulse had sprung up, and there was now the old heated skin and hurried circulation, though in a far less degree, and this the surgeon said had been the case for two days. The labour came on, the child was gradually expelled, and after the placenta had separated and was removed, the surgeon had put his hand on the abdomen, and said he had seldom felt the uterus more contracted so soon after delivery: yet within a few minutes there came on a flooding; like what I believed to be the cause: it was trifling to what I had formerly witnessed, and was readily suppressed by a cold wet napkin flapped upon the belly; but it was enough to produce syncope, and detain us in the house several hours longer than we should otherwise have remained there.

In process of time she became pregnant again. She pursued the same plan, with only this addition, that when she came within a fortnight of her confinement, she had twelve ounces of blood taken from her arm, and before a few days of delivery, eight ounces more. She fell in labour, and as soon as I entered the chamber the first thing I did was to feel her pulse; it was soft and slow as I could wish. After the birth of the child and the removal of the placenta the uterus contracted not more than in her last labour; but not the smallest degree either of flooding or faintness took place.

How often a disturbance of calculation plays an important part in uterine hæmorrhage it is difficult for an individual to know; but I suspect sufficiently often to deserve the especial attention of practitioners. I advise them when they meet with patients subject to

hæmorrhage after delivery, to notice the state of circulation before labour, and, if disturbed, to employ means for tranquillising it before labour comes on. I advise them, during labour, to use cordials cautiously, lest the placenta should separate during an excited state of circulation. I advise them after delivery, though the uterus may feel contracted, to be slow to leave the patient, if the circulation is greatly disturbed.

I have thus fulfilled the principal object of my paper, yet there occurred other circumstances in these successive labours which I think worth relating, because they throw light on some important points in the treatment of uterine hæmorrhage.

The first time I attended this lady, after the violence of the hæmorrhage was over, although the abdomen was covered with pounded ice, it returned again and again, slightly in a degree, yet sufficiently, in the debilitated state of the patient, to produce alarming occurrences of faintness; the uterus too, which had become firm and distinct, became so soft it could no longer be felt. In the hæmorrhages from the uterus, these alternations of contraction and relaxation with cessations and recurrences of bleeding, are familiar to the observing practitioner. Finding the ice so inefficient, I swept it off, and taking an ewer of cold water, I let its contents fall from a height of several feet upon the belly; the effect was instantaneous; the uterus, which the moment before had been so soft and indistinct as not to be felt within the abdomen, became small and hard, the bleeding stopped and the faintness ceased; a striking proof of the important principle, that *cold applied with a shock, is a more powerful means of producing contraction of the uterus than a greater degree of cold without the shock.*

After the second labour, at the beginning of the hæmorrhage, I found the placenta separated, and lying in the vagina; I removed it; the hæmorrhage abated, but a few minutes afterwards it returned as violently as at first; my patient turned white and faint, and said the room was going round with her. I had been talking on the subject with Dr. Rigby, at Norwich, who told me that in hæmorrhage from the uterus, after delivery, he had found La Roux's remedy the most effectual, and that it had unquestionably enabled him to save several lives, which must otherwise inevitably have been lost. I took several handkerchiefs, soaked them in vinegar, and passed them one after the other into the vagina, so as completely to fill it; this effectually prevented all external hæmorrhage; I no longer felt the

blood pouring over my hand; the uterus begun to harden, and my patient complained of pain; the colour came into her face again, and her faintness she said was gone. These favourable appearances, however, lasted but a short time; the pains ceased, the uterus grew soft and seemed to swell, the pulse became thread-like and weak, and she turned ghastly pale. It was plain that, though I had prevented the blood from escaping externally, it was flowing into the uterus in great quantity, and that I had only converted an external into an internal hæmorrhage. Feeling herself sinking, she screamed out she should never see her children again, and entreated that she might see her husband, and take leave of him before she died. The next instant I thought she had realized her fears; she sunk into the pillow pale and senseless, her face became distorted, and her limbs convulsed.

My belief now is, that when hæmorrhage occurs after the removal of the placenta, the quickest way to stop it is, to introduce the left hand closed within the uterus, apply the right hand open to the outside of the abdomen, and then between the two to compress the part where the placenta was attached, and from which chiefly the blood was flowing. When the hand is introduced merely as a stimulant, there is an interval of time between its arrival within the uterus and the secure contraction of this organ, during which much blood is often lost. By directing the hand to the very vessels from which it issues, and compressing them as I have described, this quantity is saved. If I may judge by feeling, the blood stops, in a great degree, even before the uterus contracts; the hand acts first as a tourniquet, then as a stimulant. It is true, we cannot tell with certainty where the placenta was attached, and consequently where the pressure should be applied; but as it is generally attached to or near the fundus, if the pressure be directed there, it will generally be right. Besides, after the child is born, it is often several minutes before the placenta separates and descends; if, during this interval, we pass up the finger along the chord, and observe, at its entrance into the uterus, whether it turns toward the front, the back, the right or left side, or straight up to the fundus, we shall form a tolerably exact idea of the spot to which the placenta has been attached in this individual case.

But to return to my patient. As it was my duty no longer to rely on the remedy I was using, I drew out the handkerchiefs and



applied my hands as I have described with the most immediate and happy effect ; the bleeding stopped, my patient came to herself, and whilst *she* complained of pain, *I* felt the uterus contracting ; here was an end of the hæmorrhage and the alarm, and though for many days her face looked bleached, and she almost fainted in the upright posture, she recovered without any untoward circumstance.

## CHAPTER VI.

OF SOME SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN ERRONEOUSLY ATTRIBUTED TO  
CONGESTION OF THE BRAIN.

I REMEMBER when a boy reading a story of two knights-errant, who arrived on the opposite sides of a pedestal surmounted by a shield; one declared it was gold, the other that it was silver; growing angry, they proceeded to blows, and after a long fight, each was thrown on the opposite side of the shield to that where he began the fight—when both immediately detected their error; the knight who had said it was silver finding that on the opposite side it was gold, and the knight who had said it was gold finding that on the opposite side it was silver. This story, a little modified, is a good illustration of the state of medical opinion in this age, perhaps in all ages; medical men have no occasion to tilt, for they all throng on one and the same side of the shield; they look only at the golden side, and never dream of the possibility that on the opposite side it may be of a different metal.

In observing disease, two sets of symptoms may be noticed, which are mixed together in the case, but which require to be discriminated to form a correct opinion of it: the one consists of the striking symptoms which form what may be called the physiognomy of the disease; the other consists of those symptoms which indicate the morbid state of organization on which the disease depends; the former only are noticed by the common observer, but the latter are the most important, and the skilful physician takes them for his guides in the treatment. 'He notices not only where the hour hand of nature's clock points, but also the run of its minute and second hands.'

Two patients complain occasionally of dimness of sight, swimming of the head, singing in the ears, and observe that if they turn the head on one side to look at an object, they feel as if they should fall; but the one is plump, florid, and has a full pulse; the other is pale and thin, has cold hands and feet, and a pulse small and feeble. One practitioner bleeds them both; the other bleeds the one, but does all he can to give blood to the other. The latter cures both his patients; the former cures the one, but ruins the health of the other; but such is the nature of the human mind, that the cases *for*

a preconceived opinion are retained easier than those *against* it. He remembers his good deed, forgets the other, or calls the case 'anomalous,' and marches on, without the slightest doubt that bleeding is the universal and sovereign remedy for dimness of sight, swimming of the head, and singing in the ears, save and except only in 'anomalous' cases.

I am anxious to call the attention of medical men to a disorder of children which I find invariably attributed to, and treated as, congestion or inflammation of the brain, but which I am convinced often depends on, or is connected with, the opposite state of circulation. It is chiefly indicated by heaviness of head and drowsiness; the age of the little patients whom I have seen in this state has been from a few months to two or three years; they have been rather small of their age, and of delicate health, or they have been exposed to debilitating causes. The physician finds the child lying on its nurse's lap, unable or unwilling to raise its head, half asleep, one moment opening its eyes, and the next closing them again with a remarkable expression of languor. The tongue is slightly white, the skin is not hot, at times the nurse remarks that it is colder than natural; in some cases there is at times a slight and transient flush: the bowels I have always seen already disturbed by purgatives, so that I can scarcely say what they are when left to themselves: thus the state which I am describing is marked by heaviness of the head and drowsiness, without any signs of pain, great languor, and a total absence of all active febrile symptoms. The cases which I have seen have been invariably attributed to congestion of the brain, and the remedies employed have been leeches and cold lotions to the head, and purgatives, especially calomel. Under this treatment they have gradually become worse, the languor has increased, the deficiency of heat has become greater and more permanent, the pulse quicker and weaker, and at the end of a few days, or a week, or sometimes longer, the little patients have died with symptoms apparently of exhaustion. In two cases, however, I have seen, during the last few hours, symptoms of oppressed brain, as coma, stertorous breathing, and dilated and motionless pupil.

I will relate a case as a specimen. A little girl, about two years old, small of her age, and very delicate, was taken ill with the symptoms which I have above described. She lay dozing, languid, with a cool skin, and a pulse rather weak, but not much quicker than natural. She had no disposition to take nourishment. Her sister having died only a week before of an illness which began exactly in the same



way, and which was treated by leeches and purgatives; and some doubts having been entertained by the medical attendant of the propriety of the treatment, leeches were withheld, but the child not being better at the end of two days, the parents naturally anxious about their only surviving child, consulted another practitioner. The case was immediately decided to be one of cerebral congestion, and three leeches were ordered to be applied to the head. As the nurse was going to apply them, and during the absence of the medical attendants, a friend called in who had been educated for physic, but had never practised it, and who had great influence with the family: he saw the child, said that the doctors were not sufficiently active, and advised the number of the leeches to be doubled. Six, therefore, were applied; they bled copiously; but when the medical attendants assembled in the evening they found the aspect of the case totally altered, and that for the worse; the child was deadly pale, it had scarcely any pulse, its skin was cold, the pupils were dilated and motionless when light was allowed to fall on them, and when a watch was held to its eyes it seemed not to see; there was no squinting. Did this state of vision depend on the pressure of a fluid effused into the brain since the bleeding, and during this exhausted and feeble state of circulation, or did it depend on the circulation of the brain being too languid to support the sensibility of the retina? It is well known that large losses of blood enfeeble vision. I saw a striking instance of this in a lady who flooded to death. When I entered the chamber she had no pulse, and she was tossing about in that restless state which is so fatal a sign of these terrific cases. She could still speak, asked whether I was come, (she knew I had been sent for,) and said 'Am I in any danger?—How dark the room is!—I can't see.' The shutters were open, the blind up, and the light from the window facing the bed fell strong on her face. I had the curiosity to lift the lid and observe the state of the eye; the pupil was completely dilated, and perfectly motionless, though the light fell strong on it. Who can doubt that here the insensibility of the retina depended on the deficiency of its circulation?—But to return to the little patient. The next day she had vomited her food for several times; it was therefore directed that she should take no other nutriment than a dessert-spoonful of ass's milk every hour, and this was strictly obeyed, and continued for several days. The child wasted, her features grew sharp, every now and then she looked fretful, and uttered a faint squeaking cry; the eye-balls became sunk in the socket, like those of a corpse that had been

dead a month; the skin continued cool, and often cold, and the pulse weak, tremulous, and sometimes scarcely to be felt. Under this regimen, and in this way, she continued to go on for several days. At times she revived a little, so as to induce those who prescribed this treatment to believe confidently that she would recover, and she clearly regained her sight, for if a watch was held up to her, she would follow it with her eyes. She lived longer than I expected; a full week, and then died with the symptoms of exhaustion, not with those of oppressed brain. The head was opened by a surgeon accustomed to anatomical examinations, and nothing was found but a little more serum than is usual in the ventricles.

If the reader has perused the foregoing case attentively, and has reflected on it, he will of course draw his own inferences. I can draw no others than these,—that the heaviness of head and drowsiness, which were attributed to congestion of the brain, really depended on a deficiency of nervous energy; that the bleeding and scanty diet aggravated this state, and insured the death of the child; also, that the state of the eye which so speedily followed the loss of blood, and which resembled that occasioned by effusion, did in reality depend on a deficiency in the circulation of the brain, a fact of considerable curiosity and importance.

I will now relate a case similar in the symptoms, but very different in the treatment and result. I was going out of town one afternoon, last summer, when a gentleman drove up to my door in a coach, and entreated me to go and see his child, which he said had something the matter with its head, and that the medical gentleman of the family was in the house, just going to apply leeches. I went with him immediately, and when I entered the nursery I found a child, ten months old, lying on its nurse's lap, exactly in the state which I have already described; the same unwillingness to hold its head up, the same drowsiness, languor, absence of heat and all symptoms of fever. The child was not small of its age, and had not been weak, but it had been weaned about two months, since which it had never thriven. The leeches had not been put on. I took the medical gentleman into another room, related to him the foregoing case, and several similar to it, which had been treated in the same way, and had died in the same way. Then I related to him a similar case which I had seen in the neighbouring square, which had been treated with ammonia in decoction of bark and good diet, which had recovered; not slowly, so as to make it doubtful whether the treatment was the cause of the recovery, but so speedily that at



the third visit I took my leave. He consented to postpone the leeches, and to pursue the plan which I recommended. We directed the gruel diet to be left off, and no other to be given than ass's milk, of which the child was to take, at least, a pint and a half, and at most a quart, in the twenty-four hours. Its medicine was ten minims of the aromatic spirit of ammonia in a small draught every four hours. When we met the next day, the appearance of the child proved that our measures had been right; the nurse was walking about the nursery with it upright in her arms. It looked happy and laughing; the same plan was continued another day; the next day it was so well that I took my leave, merely directing the ammonia to be given at longer intervals, and thus gradually withdrawn, the ass's milk to be continued, which kept the bowels sufficiently open, with aperient medicine.

So inveterate is the disposition to attribute drowsiness in children to congestion of the brain, and to treat it so, that I have seen an infant four months old, half dead from the diarrhœa produced by artificial food, and capable of being saved only by cordials, aromatics, and a breast of milk; but because it lay dozing on its nurse's lap two leeches had been put on the temples, and this by a practitioner of more than average sense and knowledge. I took off the leeches, stopped the bleeding of the bites, and attempted nothing but to restrain the diarrhœa, and get in plenty of nature's nutriment, and as I succeeded in this, the drowsiness went off, and the child revived. If it could have reasoned and spoken, it would have told this practitioner how wrong he was; any one, who from long defect in the organs of nutrition, is reduced, so that he has neither flesh on his body, nor blood in his veins, well knows what it is to lay down his head and doze away half the day without any congestion or inflammation of his brain. This error, although I have specified it only in a particular complaint of children, may be observed in our notions and treatment of other diseases, and at other periods of life. If a woman has a profuse hæmorrhage after delivery, she will probably have a distressing headache, with throbbing in the head, noises in the ears, a colourless complexion, and a quick, weak, often thrilling pulse, all which symptoms are greatly increased by any exertion. I have seen this state treated in various ways, by small opiates, gentle aperients, and unstimulating nourishment, with no relief. I have seen blood taken away from the head, and it has afforded relief for a few hours; but then the headache, throbbing, and noises have returned worse than ever: the truth is, that this is



the acute state of what in a minor degree and in a more chronic form occurs in chlorosis, by which I mean pale-faced amenorrhœa, whether at puberty or in after-life. It may be called *acute chlorosis*, and, like that disease, is best cured by steel, given at first in small doses, gradually increased, merely obviating constipation by aloetic aperients.

I shall not encumber this paper with a multiplicity of cases, but state that the above are only specimens of a class of which I have seen enough to convince me that they deserve the attention of the profession. If I had any doubt about this, this doubt would be removed by the fact, that Dr. Marshall Hall has already recognised them,\* and described them in a paper which has been read at the Medical and Chirurgical Society.† He has therefore anticipated me in announcing them, but so far from regretting this, I am glad to support my statements by the authority of so observing and reflecting a physician. The only difference between our experience seems to be this—that he attributes the state which I have been describing to the diarrhœa produced by weaning, or to the application of leeches for some previous complaint. In most of the cases I have seen, however, the child has had no previous illness, and the leeches have been applied subsequent to the drowsiness, and as a remedy for it.

The children who were the subjects of this affection, and were thus treated, died, not with symptoms of oppressed brain, but with

\* Since the above was printed, and just before striking it off, I found the following passage in Dr. Abercrombie's 'Researches on the Brain,' page 310: 'I have many times, says Dr. Abercrombie (page 310), 'seen children lie for a day or two in this kind of stupor, and recover under the use of wine and nourishment. It is often scarcely to be distinguished from the coma which accompanies diseases of the brain. It attacks them after some continuance of exhausting diseases, such as tedious and neglected diarrhœa; and the patients lie in a state of insensibility, the pupils dilated, the eyes open and insensible, the face pale, and pulse feeble. It may continue for a day or two, and terminate favorably, or it may be fatal. This affection appears to correspond with the apoplexia ex inanitione of the older writers. It differs from syncope in coming on gradually, and in continuing a considerable time, perhaps a day or two; and it is not, like syncope, induced by sudden and temporary causes, but by causes of gradual exhaustion going on for a considerable time. It differs from mere exhaustion in the complete abolition of sense and motion, while the pulse can be felt distinctly, and is, in some cases, of tolerable strength.' It does not appear that Dr. Abercrombie opened the heads of any of these children, and therefore it is doubtful what was the state of the brain with regard to the blood-vessels and the fluid in its ventricles.

† A short report of the paper will be found in the 'London Medical Gazette' for 1829.

those of exhaustion, and on examining the head after death, the blood-vessels were unusually empty, and the fluid in the ventricles rather in excess: in two instances, death was preceded by symptoms of effusion, viz. blindness, a dilated pupil, coma, and convulsions; and after death the ventricles were found distended with fluid to the amount of several ounces, the sinuses and veins of the brain being remarkably empty. I believe the prevalent notion of the profession is, that all sudden effusions of water into the brain are the result of inflammatory action; but putting aside for a moment this dogma of the schools, consider the circumstances of this case. For several days before death, all that part of the circulating system which was cognisable to the senses, was at the lowest ebb consistent with life, and after death the blood-vessels of the brain were found remarkably empty of blood, and the ventricles unusually full of water. From such facts I can draw no other inference than this,—that this sudden effusion was a passive exudation from the exhalents of the ventricles occasioned by a state of the circulation the very opposite to congestion or inflammation. This is corroborated by the dissection of animals which have been bled to death. Drs. Saunders and Seeds, of Edinburgh, found that in animals bled to death, whether from veins or arteries, there was found more or less of serous effusion within the head, and Dr. Kelly thus expresses himself:—‘If instead of bleeding usque ad mortem we were to bleed animals more sparingly and repeatedly, I have no doubt that we should succeed in draining the brain of a much larger quantity of its red blood; but in such experiments we shall, I think, find a larger effusion of serum.’

\* \* \* \* ‘Though we cannot, by general depletion, entirely or nearly empty the vascular system of the brain as we can the vessels of the other parts of the body, it is yet possible by profuse hæmorrhages to drain it of a sensible portion of its red blood, that the place of this spoliation seems to be supplied both by extra and intra vascular serum, and that watery effusion within the head is a pretty constant concomitant or consequence of great sanguineous depletion.’\* But if this be true, it is of great practical importance,

\* Kelly on the Pathology of the Brain. Trans. of the Med. and Chir. Soc. of Edinburgh, 1828. Part I.

Dr. Kelly found that the loss of blood required to kill an animal of a given size was very uniform. A sheep required from 34 to 38 ounces; a dog, weighing 20 lbs., was killed by the loss of 15 ounces; another, weighing between 40 and 50 lb., was killed by the loss of 37 ounces; another weighing 18 lbs., was killed by the loss of 11 ounces.



for if we take delicate feeble children, and by bleeding and purging for an imaginary congestion of the brain, reduce their circulation to a very low ebb, and keep it so, we run the risk of producing that very effusion of serum into the brain which we are endeavouring by our remedies to prevent. The following case, though I would not cite it as one of the class which I am describing, still bears upon the question of passive effusion into the brain.

A little girl, about three years old, small of her age, delicate in health, and wayward in disposition, was taken ill with the following symptoms: she could not hold her head up, lay dozing, for the most part, and complained occasionally of momentary pain at the top of the head. Her skin was cool, she had little disposition for food, her pulse was 76, not remitting, but irregular; neither light nor noise were disagreeable to her. Leeches were applied to the temples twice, and she was purged daily, but the treatment, after a week, had afforded no relief to the symptoms. The vertex was now shaved, and six leeches applied where she complained of pain, a cold lotion was applied frequently to the vertex, and she took a grain of calomel every four hours for two days. The leeches bled well, and the calomel operated freely, but without affording any relief to the symptoms; the pulse too lost its slowness and irregularity; it became weak and quick, about 130. In this state, the little girl still continuing to complain of pain in her head, six more leeches were applied to the vertex, making in all two dozen, and purging was continued. The next day she appeared much altered; she was pale and cold, and fainted on being raised. Depleting remedies were now altogether discontinued, and her diet was mended though liquid, but she continued weak and faint, and the next day was convulsed. She was insensible, her limbs were stiff, her eyes drawn to the left side, not both eyes turned towards the nose, but both turned to the left. As she could not swallow, all that was done was to warm her, for she was cold, and to inject a glyster containing spirits of turpentine. After a few hours the convulsions ceased, she came to herself with perfect vision, and the natural appearance of the eye; she talked, took nutriment, but still complained occasionally of pain on the head. The next day she was so much better that there seemed a fair prospect of her recovery. She was at this time taking no medicine, and feeding on equal parts of gruel and milk, or gruel and veal broth. As two days had passed without the bowels being moved, a solution of salts in infusion of senna was given, and this



not operating after eight hours, she took two drachms of the compound decoction of aloes. The next morning she had one stool, but that an enormous one, and soon afterwards became comatose, with a dilated pupil, stertorous breathing, and palsy of the left side. In the evening she died; two weeks and three days from the beginning of her illness. The next morning the head was opened by Mr. King, of Regent-street, formerly Interne at the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris, and Teacher of Anatomy, to whom I am indebted for several valuable dissections: the following are his notes of the examination. The vessels of the dura mater were quite empty; along the two posterior thirds of the superior longitudinal sinus the two plates of the arachnoid membrane adhered by a white substance like cheese; it was limited to the extent of the sinus laterally; there was no injection in the vicinity of this lymph; the sinuses were empty; the veins of the pia mater were remarkably empty, and this membrane was pale; the substance of the brain was remarkably pale; under the arachnoid membrane a thin stratum of limpid serum was effused. The ventricles were full of the same fluid, and a little distended by it. In all, there was not more than an ounce and a half of serum. On the surface of the ventricles two or three veins, rather large, were evident.

How far our opinion upon the nature of the case may be modified by the white cheesy substance in the arachnoid membrane; whether the mode of treatment was wrong, or, on the contrary, right, but not prompt and active enough; on these points I shall not offer a conjecture; but when I consider, 1st, the low ebb at which the circulation was kept for several days before death; 2nd, the emptiness of the blood-vessels of the brain discovered after death; and 3rd, that the symptoms of oppressed brain did not occur more than twelve hours before death; I cannot refrain from inferring that this sudden effusion of water was not an active exudation from vessels in a state of congestion, but a passive exudation from empty and feeble exhalents.

I do not expect that medical men will take my word as exclusive evidence for the truth of this paper, neither do I wish it; all I ask is that they will allow my observations and reasonings to induce them to look out for similar cases and judge for themselves. With regard to the point, that heaviness of head and drowsiness of children often depend not on congestion, but on deficiency of nervous power, and require for their cure not depletion, but support, I am

quite satisfied that candid observers will find that I am right. With regard to the other point, that sudden effusion of serum may take place in the brain from a state of the circulation the opposite to congestion or inflammation, it is more likely, even if true, to be overlooked; for such is the force of preconceived opinion, and such the prevalent notions on the subject, that the following will be the process in most minds. A child has been suffering from obscure symptoms for many days, when suddenly and unexpectedly it becomes blind, its pupils are dilated and motionless, it becomes convulsed, comatose, and dies. On opening the head the serum is found in the ventricles, and without any further inquiry it is immediately taken for granted that this effusion was the effect of overlooked inflammation of the brain, and regret is felt that active depletion had not been employed: the inference may be a correct one; all I contend for is, that it should not be granted, but that those circumstances should be minutely inquired into which throw light on the state of the circulation in which the effusion occurred.

It is surely impossible for the reader to mistake me so far as to suppose that I am denying the important practical truths, that heaviness of head and drowsiness in children commonly depend on congestion, and are to be relieved by depletion, and that acute hydrocephalus is a serous effusion, the result of inflammation, and capable of being cured only in the inflammatory stage by bleeding and purging. These vital truths I would state as strongly as any man, but there are opposite truths. All that I mean is that these symptoms depend, not on congestion, which is to be relieved by bleeding, but on deficient nervous power, which is to be relieved by sustaining remedies. All I advise is, that not only the heaviness of head and drowsiness should be noticed, but the accompanying symptoms also, and that a drowsy child, who is languid, feeble, cool, or even cold, with a quick weak pulse, should not be treated by bleeding, starving, and purging, like a drowsy child who is strong, plethoric, has a flushed face, perhaps swelled gums, and a heated skin. The cases which I have been describing 'may not improperly be compared to certain species of plants, by no means uncommon, which are liable to be confounded with others by an inattentive observer.'\*

\* Abernethy's Works, Preface, p. 7.

IS THE PLAGUE  
A  
CONTAGIOUS DISEASE?

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A REVIEW.



## PREFATORY NOTICE.

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THE following paper on the Plague has nothing to do with the title or the object of this volume; but as it may possibly be the only one I shall ever put to the press, I am desirous of preserving this among my other medical papers. The reader may remember that, about the year 1825, great pains were taken to persuade the legislature that the plague is not a contagious disease, and that the quarantine laws are a useless burthen on trade; that two committees were appointed by Parliament to hear evidence on the subject, and that Government was on the eve of modifying and relaxing these laws. There were many persons far more competent than myself to put the question in its true light; but seeing that no one would undertake it, I wrote the following paper, and published it in the 'Quarterly Review,' as the best pulpit from which to address the Government and the people of England. What may have been the merit of the paper, I, being its author, am no judge; but this I know, that the materials were collected carefully and honestly, and that the article worked well. I received a communication from his Majesty's ministers, that it had satisfied their minds on the subject, the Quarantine Laws were left untouched, and the subject which had been so actively discussed before has been since scarcely alluded to. This may be 'an accidental coincidence.' In reprinting this paper I have omitted several passages; I do so because I did not write them; they were inserted by one of the editors. If I had written them, I would not have withdrawn them now. I preserve this paper, that it may have an additional chance of being useful on some future occasion, for Dr. Russell tells us that the belief in the uncontagiousness of the plague, and the disposition to repeal the Quarantine Laws, is a periodical mania, which comes round after a term of years; it will most probably rage again before many have elapsed.

## IS THE PLAGUE A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE?

DE FOE thought the events of the plague in London, in 1665, so full of fearful interest, that he formed them into one of his novels, yet the fictitious narrative is not more terrific than the real one. Dr. Hodges, one of the physicians appointed by government to visit the sick, and who was thus occupied from morning to night for many months, gives the following account of the scenes which he witnessed. The passage is too long to quote entirely, but we give an abridged translation of it.

‘In the months of August and September, three, four, or five thousand died in a week, once eight thousand. In some houses carcasses lay waiting for burial, and in others, persons in their last agonies. In one room were heard dying groans, in another the ravings of delirium, and not far off relations and friends bewailing their loss, and the dismal prospect of their own departure. Some of the infected ran about staggering like drunken men, and fell, and expired in the streets, others lay comatose, never to be awakened but by the last trump; others fell dead in the market while buying necessities for the support of life; the divine was taken in the exercise of his priestly office, and physicians found no safety in their own antidotes, but died administering them to others. It was not uncommon to see an inheritance pass successively to three or four heirs in as many days. The number of sextons was not sufficient to bury the dead. The bells seemed hoarse with continued tolling, and at last ceased. The burial places could not hold the dead, they were thrown into large pits dug in waste grounds, in heaps of thirty or forty together. It often happened that those who attended the funeral of their friends one evening, were the next carried to their own long home; and yet the worst was not certain, for the disease as yet had no relaxation.’\*

Such was the state of London about one hundred and sixty years ago.

This scourge of the human race has been believed, by the most judicious physicians who have witnessed its ravages, to be communicated from person to person, that is, to be contagious. Quarantine

\* Hodges' *Loimologia*, page 16.



laws were therefore instituted. '*Before this,*' as Lord Holland sensibly remarked, 'the plague frequently devastated every country in Europe; but *since* then its returns have been comparatively rare.' Before the year 1665, Sydenham remarked that the plague visited this country *only* once in forty or fifty years: since that calamitous year this happy land has known nothing of its ravages; and so many generations have lived and died in security, that the clause in the Litany for protection 'from plague and pestilence,' is now uttered by the congregation without thought or feeling. In this blessed, yet dangerous ignorance of the public mind, some persons have started up, who affirm that the wisest of their forefathers, and the most experienced of their contemporaries, have been and are all wrong upon the subject—that the plague is not contagious—that quarantine laws ought to be abolished; and the public, and even our legislators, seem inclined to believe them. In these critical circumstances it is a duty, which some one ought to perform, to give a clear and faithful account of this momentous question—to state the reasons which have satisfied the most competent judges that the plague is contagious—to expose the ignorance of those who are attempting to mislead the public, and the indiscretion of those who are inclined to believe them.

Some diseases become prevalent because their causes are so diffused as to affect many persons in the same place at the same time; other diseases become prevalent because the bodies of the sick give out a noxious material, which excites similar diseases in the bodies of the healthy. The former are called epidemic, the latter contagious. The causes of epidemic diseases may be either deficient food, as in a general scarcity; or heat, or cold, or great vicissitudes from one to the other, or noxious states of the atmosphere, which are not perceptible by our senses, thermometers, or barometers. Some of these are understood, as marsh exhalations; others are involved in great obscurity. The human constitution is a delicate instrument, and can perceive qualities which our philosophical instruments and chemical tests do not enable us to detect.

The noxious matters produced by the bodies of the sick, which propagate contagious diseases from person to person, may be either something visible and substantial, as that formed in the pustules of small-pox, or the vesicles of the cow-pock; or something invisible, the existence of which is known only by its effects, as in the measles, the scarlet-fever, the hooping-cough.



The only way in which we can distinguish those diseases which are prevalent from an extensive cause acting at the same time on a number of people, from those diseases which are prevalent because they are communicated from person to person, is by certain circumstances in the mode of their diffusion. Now, the circumstances by which we know that a disease is propagated by contagion, are these: first, that those persons are most liable to the disease who approach those affected with it, and that in proportion to the nearness of the approach; secondly, that those who avoid intercourse with persons affected with the disease generally or always escape it, and that in proportion to the care with which they avoid them; thirdly, that the disease is communicable from one to another by inoculation. If all these circumstances can be ascertained in the diffusion of a disease, and each with clearness and distinctness, we have all the evidence which we can have, for believing that the disease is propagated by contagion. The proof is as complete as the nature of the subject admits. But the evidence for the belief that the disease is propagated by contagion, varies much in degree in different cases; it may amount only to that which creates a strong suspicion—or it may amount to that which creates an absolute certainty. The most decided single proof that a disease is contagious, is inoculation: yet there are several diseases the contagiousness of which is undoubted, notwithstanding the absence of this proof; as, for instance, the scarlet-fever and hooping-cough.

But there are occasions when it is necessary to act on the supposition that a disease is contagious, though the evidence for this opinion is far short of proof. The question is sometimes so difficult—life and health are so precious—and the precautions necessary to prevent the communication of the disease, if it should be contagious, comparatively such trifling evils, that a prudent physician will take care to be on the safe side, and act as if he was certain it was contagious, although to an indifferent person, weighing the evidence in the scales of mere speculation, it would appear only a bare possibility; and here is the difference between a science, the subjects of which are inanimate things, like alkalies, and a science the subjects of which are flesh and blood, and health and life: that whereas, in the former, the onus probandi lies on him who affirms the proposition, because the disbelief of it leads to no injurious consequence; in the latter, the onus probandi lies on him who denies it, because the disbelief would occasion the neglect of measures which are harm-

less even if they be unnecessary, but the neglect of which may be fatal if they be essential.

Five-and-twenty years ago, Dr. Wells published his belief that erysipelas was sometimes contagious. The following is one of several facts which led him to this opinion :—An elderly man died of erysipelas of the face. His nephew, who visited him during his illness, was soon afterwards attacked by, and died of the same disease. The wife of the old man was seized with the same disease a few days after his death, and died in about a week. The landlady of the same house was next affected with it, and then her nurse, who was sent to the workhouse, where she died. Dr. Wells mentioned his suspicion to several medical friends, among whom were Dr. Pitcairn and Dr. Baillie, and they related to him several circumstances which had led them to a similar opinion.

Lying-in women are subject to a disease called puerperal fever. In general it is of unfrequent occurrence, and out of large numbers scarcely one suffers from it. There are times, however, when this disease rages like an epidemic, and is very fatal. At these times circumstances sometimes occur which create a strong suspicion that the disorder may be communicated by a medical attendant or nurse from one lying-in woman to another. We give the following, out of many authentic instances : A surgeon practising midwifery in a populous town, opened the body of a woman who died of puerperal fever, and thereby contracted an offensive smell in his clothes ; nevertheless, surgeon-like, he continued to wear them, and to visit and deliver his patients in them. The first woman whom he attended after the dissection was seized with, and died of, the same disease. The same happened to the second and the third. At length he was struck with the suspicion that he was carrying the disease from patient to patient in his clothes—he burnt them, and not another of his patients was affected.

These are incidents calculated to make a deep impression on the minds of those who witness them, and to create a strong suspicion that these diseases are, under certain circumstances, contagious. Yet if such evidence as this be contrasted with incidents of an opposite kind, in which free communication has produced no such consequences, and be mixed up with the ordinary history of the diseases, the whole statement would produce little effect on indifferent persons—on cold judges like a committee of the House of Commons.

Few persons believe that consumption of the lungs is contagious ;

it is a question which requires for its solution long and attentive observation. A physician in early, and even in middle life, is an inadequate judge; but there are English physicians of the greatest experience, the highest eminence, and the least fanciful minds, who are convinced that this disease is sometimes communicated from a wife to a husband, or from a husband to a wife, during the long and close attendance which its lingering nature and strong affection sometimes occasion. It is an opinion, however, which he who entertains can never demonstrate to be true to him who rejects it; yet it is a reason for every precaution which does not interfere with the duties of the healthy to the sick.

In medicine, and all but the demonstrative sciences, there is often light enough to guide our conduct, when there is not enough to gratify our curiosity; hence practical men are often compelled to act on evidence which would sound unsatisfactory in the statement. There is no paradox in saying, that he who can give a striking reason for every measure which he adopts is, for that very reason, a bad medical adviser, because he must neglect many which are necessary and useful, but the reasons for which at the outset are extremely obscure. We cannot give a stronger instance of the difference between the evidence which is required to satisfy incompetent judges, and that on which physicians are often obliged to act, than that which is detailed in Dr. P. M. Latham's excellent 'Account of the Disease lately prevalent at the General Penitentiary.'

Having thus considered the signs by which we distinguish a contagious disease—the different degrees of clearness with which these signs show themselves—and the necessity there often is to act on the supposition that a disease is contagious, although the evidence for it is far short of demonstration—we may now go on to consider whether these signs are discoverable in the history of the plague in a sufficient degree to require us to act on that supposition. Now, whoever will carefully examine the accounts of the plague transmitted to us by those who have witnessed its ravages, will find ample evidence of the following truths: 1st. That it is most liable to affect those persons who approach patients affected with it, and that in proportion to the nearness of the approach: 2dly. That those who avoid all intercourse with persons affected with the plague generally escape the disease, and that in proportion to the care with which they avoid it. There are few facts, indeed, in medical history, for which there is such a mass of evidence as these, or on which the



experience of past and present times is so uniform. The most remarkable examples are afforded by the introduction of the plague into countries which had long been free from it, in consequence of intercourse with places in which it was then raging. The clearness with which this intercourse has been often traced is truly wonderful, considering the many temptations which travellers or mariners coming from countries infected with the plague have to clandestine intercourse. Of such histories there are so many on record, that the difficulty is which to select; we will begin with the plague at Marseilles, in 1720.

For *seventy years* the plague had never visited this maritime city, when, on the 25th May, 1720, a vessel sailed into the harbour, under the following circumstances: She had left Seyde, in Syria, on the 31st of January, with a clean bill of health, but the plague had broken out a few days ago after her departure, and she had called at Tripoli, not far from Seyde, where she took in some Turkish passengers. During the passage one of the Turks died, after an illness of a few days. Two sailors attempted to heave the corpse overboard, but before they had time to do so the captain called them away, and ordered it to be done by the comrades of the deceased. In the course of a few days the two sailors who had touched the corpse fell sick, and speedily died. Soon after this two others of the crew, one the surgeon of the vessel, who of course had attended the sick, were attacked with the same symptoms, and died. These occurrences so alarmed the captain, that he shut himself up in the poop during the rest of the voyage. Three other sailors subsequently fell ill, were put ashore at Leghorn, and died there; the physician and surgeons of the infirmary certifying that their disease had been a pestilential fever. The vessel arrived at Marseilles, and the crew and cargo were landed at the lazaretto. Soon afterwards the disease attacked another of the crew—an officer put on board the vessel to superintend the quarantine—a boy belonging to the ship—two porters employed in unloading the merchandize—another porter similarly employed—three more porters employed about the merchandize—the priest who had administered the last sacrament to the sick—the surgeon of the lazaretto and his whole family. Notwithstanding these events, the passengers, having performed a short quarantine of less than twenty days, were allowed to take up their quarters in the town, and to carry with them their clothes and packages. There were anti-contagionists in those days at Marseilles, as there are now in England, and this conduct was the result of their advice. When

passengers after a voyage of nearly four months, and a quarantine of nearly three weeks, are at length let loose in a large city, their first employment is to roam about the streets; they have things to sell, and to buy, and to see; they come in contact in the streets and in the shops with persons whom they think no more about, and who think no more about them. It is not surprising, therefore, that the exact traces of the disease should soon be lost, and that it should be often difficult, and even impossible, to follow it satisfactorily in every part of its progress. Of its origin and early advances in the town the following account is given by M. Bertrand, a resident physician at Marseilles at the time:

‘What is certain is, that the plague was on board the ship of Capt. Chataud; that it was communicated to the infirmary by the merchandize with which it was freighted; and that one of the first who fell sick in the city had been passenger in the ship, and had only quitted the infirmary a few days, with his clothes and merchandize; and that among the very early victims of the distemper were the family of a famous contraband trader, near the convent of the Carmes, and those of some other contraband traders who resided in the Rue de l’Escale and its neighbourhood; that the suburb adjoining the infirmary was attacked nearly at the same time with the Rue de l’Escale. I leave my readers to make the reflections naturally suggested by these facts.’

We pass over the terrific scenes which the subsequent progress of the plague occasioned in this ill-fated city; though they should be read by every one, if any such there be, who may have to legislate on this subject, and not be duly impressed with its fearful importance. We will not represent in detail the early doubts and obstinate denials that the disease was the plague; the fears of the magistrates to alarm the people; the unwillingness of the people to believe; their terror at its first announcement, and after a short and deceptive calm, their drunken joy and mad confidence; the contests between the physicians and the magistrates; the insults offered by the populace to the former; the scarcity of food; the bodies collected in the houses and in the streets, for want of persons to remove them; the fires lighted in the squares and market-places, and before the doors of every house, for the purpose of burning out the contagion, till the whole city was in a blaze; the flight of the people from the town;

the immense graves ; cart-loads of bodies tumbled into them in the utmost disorder ; the shops and public places closed, and the deserted streets—all these form a picture which bewilders the mind by the number and horror of the objects—the mere recapitulation of them produces a sensation of giddiness and sickness.

But of this confusion we must select one or two incidents from which an inference may be drawn.

The Hôtel Dieu contained between three and four hundred foundlings of both sexes, besides the proper officers and attendants. At this hospital, a woman who had escaped from the Rue de l'Escale presented herself, stating that she was ill of a common fever. She was taken in and conducted to her bed by two maid-servants of the house ; the next day the two maid-servants fell ill, and died in a few hours. The day after, the matron who had visited the patient fell ill, and died almost as suddenly. The disease spread with amazing rapidity ; it destroyed all the children, together with every person belonging to the house—governors, confessors, physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, officers, servants, except about thirty persons, and even these took the infection, but ultimately recovered.

One of the greatest difficulties was the removal and interment of the dead. At first carts had been hired to carry them away, and beggars and vagabonds were employed in the service. These soon died, and those who followed them in their offices soon followed them in their fate. The magistrates then applied to the officers of the galleys, praying for convicts to carry away the dead : this prayer was granted, and the convicts were promised their liberty if they survived. The first supply amounted to one hundred and thirty-three ; these perished in less than a week. Another hundred were granted. In the course of six days they were reduced to twelve ; and thus, in less than a fortnight, out of two hundred and thirty-three—two hundred and twenty-one perished.

An official report, transmitted to the Regent, stated that the physicians and surgeons of Marseilles unanimously declared, 'that when one person in a family was attacked and died, the rest soon underwent the same fate, insomuch that there were instances of families entirely destroyed in that manner ; and if any one of an infected family fled to another house, the contagion accompanied him, and proved fatal to the family where he had taken refuge.'

While these horrors were going on in the city, where intercourse was almost unrestrained, some places, in which precautions were used



to prevent communication with the infected, escaped either in a great degree, or altogether. When the disease was admitted to be the plague (and some useful time was lost before that admission was made), the galleys were detached from the shore, anchored in the middle of the port, and separated from the rest of the vessels by a barrier. There were two hospitals belonging to the galleys, one for the crews, the other for the convicts; the former was reserved for the infected, in case the disease should break out, the latter for patients under other diseases. There was a third, or intermediate hospital, to which all doubtful cases were sent, until the nature of their disease manifested itself. The galleys were frequently visited by medical men, and on the slightest notice of indisposition the patient was immediately removed to one of these hospitals. The plague, however, made its appearance, and continued in existence from the beginning of August to the beginning of March; the population of the galleys amounted to ten thousand; yet thirteen hundred persons only were attacked, and of these about half recovered. We will not speculate on the many modes in which the precautions against intercourse with infected persons may have been evaded, though the particular instance has escaped detection; but we point our reader's attention to the singular difference between the numbers who took the disorder under one system on land, and under another at sea.

A certificate, given by the Bishop of Marseilles, states that 'the plague has not penetrated into the religious communities, who have had no communication with persons abroad, and who have used the precautions necessary to prevent them.' Another given by the first sheriff of Marseilles, states that 'the families which were shut up, and had not communicated abroad, particularly the nunneries, had been protected from this scourge; which was introduced into some of them by communications with strange persons.'

Before the commencement of this plague, which certain physicians now call a *modification* of the typhus, the population of Marseilles was estimated at ninety thousand persons. Of these, forty thousand perished; but it spread to Aix, Toulon, and various other places in Provence, and destroyed in all more than eighty thousand persons.

If the foregoing narrative does not satisfactorily prove that the disease was propagated from person to person, we know not what will. The contagiousness of the measles, scarlet-fever, and hooping-cough, does not rest upon stronger evidence; and it will become impossible to

prove any disease to be contagious, excepting those which are capable of being communicated by inoculation.

The next plague which we propose to notice, was that which visited Moscow in the year 1771, and of which a short but lucid history was given by Dr. de Mertens, a physician practising in that city at the time of the visitation. The plague had not appeared at Moscow for *more than a century and a half*. In 1769 war commenced between the Russians and the Turks; the next year the plague appeared in Wallachia and Moldavia, and many Russians died of it in the city of Yassy. The following summer it entered Poland, and was conveyed to Kiow, where it carried off four thousand people. At first all communication was cut off between that city and Moscow, and guards were stationed in the great roads. A colonel, attended by two soldiers, set off from Choczin, where the plague was raging. The colonel died on the road, but the two soldiers pursued their way, arrived at Moscow, were taken ill at the military hospital, and died soon after their arrival. This was in November, 1770. Towards the end of this month the Demonstrator of Anatomy at this hospital was attacked by a putrid petechial fever, of which he died on the third day. The male attendants of the hospital lived with their families in two chambers separated from the others. In one of these, one person after another, to the number of eleven, fell ill with a putrid disease, attended by petechiæ, and, in some, by buboes and carbuncles; most of them died between the third and the fifth day. The same disease attacked the attendants who resided in the other chamber. On the 22d December, an official statement was made of these facts, and ten physicians, out of eleven, pronounced the disease to be the plague. The hospital, which was placed without the city, was closed, and a military guard interrupted all communication from without; the patients affected with the pestilence, together with their wives and children, were separated from the rest, and the clothes and moveables of those who had died of the disease, and those who were still ill with it, were burnt. The weather became intensely cold, and the traces of contagion being lost in the hospital and in the city, the people passed from fear to fearless security. The communications with the hospital were re-opened in February, but on the 11th of March the physicians were again convoked, when Dr. Yagelsky stated that in a large building, a manufactory of military clothing, situated in the centre of the city, and where three thousand individuals were employed, eight persons had been attacked

with symptoms similar to those observed in the patients at the military hospital three months before; that is, with petechiæ, carbuncles, and buboes. The work-people likewise declared, that at the beginning of January, a woman, who had a tumour in the cheek, had gone to the home of one of the work-people, who was her relation—that since this time the disease had spread in the manufactory, and one hundred and seventeen persons had died of it. The manufactory was closed and guarded; nevertheless, several of the work-people escaped by the windows the following night. We pass over the precautions used to prevent the spreading of the disease, and its abatement—the relaxation of precautions, and the recurrence of the disease. Towards the end of July, the mortality amounted to two hundred daily—by the middle of August to four hundred—towards the end of the same month to six hundred—at the beginning of September to seven hundred—some days afterwards to eight hundred, and at length to one thousand. On the evening of the 5th of September, the populace rose, broke open the hospitals, put an end to all restrictions, and restored the religious ceremonies used for the sick—the images of saints were carried with great pomp to the sick, and kissed by every one successively; the people, according to ancient custom, embraced the dead, and buried them within the city, declaring that human precautions were odious to the Divinity—they hunted down the physicians, broke their furniture, and sacked their houses. This riot lasted only a few days, but it was followed by an addition of two or three hundred to the daily mortality—almost all the priests perished. In October the disease began to decline, and at length ceased together with the year. The total mortality was estimated at more than eighty thousand persons, exclusive of that in the towns and villages to which it had spread, which cannot have been less than twenty thousand. These places, however, suffered much less, because the inhabitants, taught by the miserable example of Moscow, readily permitted precautions to be used. Criminals were employed to bury the dead, and when these perished, the poor were hired to do it. To each were given a cloak, gloves, and mask of oil-cloth; and they were directed never to touch a corpse with naked hands, but they paid no attention to this advice. Most of them became ill about the fourth or fifth day, and great numbers perished. The plague committed its greatest ravages among the poor; the nobles, gentlemen, and merchants, generally escaping. ‘It was communicated,’ says Dr. Mertens, ‘only by the touch of infected persons or



'clothes; when we visited the sick, we approached them within the 'distance of a foot, using no other precaution than this—never to 'touch their bodies, clothes, or beds.' The physicians, who only inspected the patients, generally escaped the disease; but of the surgeons, who were obliged to touch them, two died in the city, and a number of assistant-surgeons in the hospitals. While the disease was raging in the city, the Foundling Hospital afforded a signal example of the salutary effects of seclusion. It contained one thousand children, and four hundred adults. All communication with the people was cut off, and the plague never penetrated within the building. One night four attendants, and as many soldiers, escaped from the hospital. These, on their return, were attacked by the disease, but they were separated from the rest of the house, and it spread no further. Compare the fate of this establishment with that of the Foundling Hospital at Marseilles; the contrast of the two cases is one of the most striking circumstances on record.

The last plague which we shall notice is that of Malta, in the year 1813, of which the history has been given by Dr. Calvert in the 'Medico-Chirurgical Transactions,' and by Sir Robert Brook Faulkner, both of them eye-witnesses. Valetta had not been visited by the plague *for one hundred and thirty-seven years*, when a vessel, called the San Nicolo, having left Alexandria, where the plague was prevalent, arrived at Malta on the 29th of March, 1813. During her voyage, two of her crew had died of a rapid disease, one with a black tumour on his neck. In consequence of these deaths, the hatches were shut down, and the crew kept on deck during the rest of the voyage. Upon the arrival of the vessel, the crew were sent ashore to the lazaretto, the captain and his servant being separated from the rest. The day after, the captain was seized with headache, giddiness, and other symptoms of the plague, and died in thirty-six hours. His servant, who had assisted the two sick men during the voyage, was seized with similar symptoms, and died in the same length of time. These circumstances created considerable alarm in Valetta, but the rest of the crew continued well, and the San Nicolo having returned to Alexandria with a new crew, the apprehensions of the Maltese soon subsided. On the 19th of April, however, a Maltese physician was taken to visit a child of the name of Borg, which had been ill for five or six days, and was dying with a carbuncle on its breast. On the 1st of May he was sent for to see the mother of the dead child, who was ill with fever, and a

painful tumour in the groin; she was pregnant; on the third day of her illness she was seized with premature labour, delivered of a seven months' child, which died directly, and died herself the next morning with another tumour in the other groin. During the illness of the mother, another of her children was taken ill, but recovered. On the 4th of May, Borg, the father of the family, was seized with fever, attended by glandular swellings in the axilla and groin. The physician now reported these circumstances to the Deputation of Health. Borg, his whole family, and those who were known to have communicated with them, were removed to the lazaretto. The courts of justice, the theatre, and the public places, were shut up, and the city was inspected by physicians. When Borg's wife was in labour, a midwife, who lived in another part of Valetta, where there was no appearance of the plague, was sent for to attend her. She came, and having delivered her patient, returned home. Several days having passed without her appearance, one of her kinsmen went to her house, and knocked at the door for some time, but no one answered. At length he broke it open, went in, and discovered her on her knees by her bedside. She did not move, and, on shaking her, he found that she was dead. It seems as if the poor creature, feeling the approach of death, had sought refuge in prayer, and had died in the very act and attitude. When the body was sent to the hospital, plague-spots were found upon it. Her kinsman, on making this discovery, immediately ran to the Committee of Health, and stated what he had seen; on which, he was not allowed to return to his family, but was sent to the lazaretto, where, on the 17th of May, he was seized with the plague, and died in twenty-four hours. A girl, who was accustomed to sleep in the midwife's house, was taken ill with fever and glandular enlargements. Borg and his father died; another of his children became ill with it, but recovered. Thus far the disease had been confined to the crew of the vessel which came from Alexandria, and to Borg's family, and those who had communicated with them; but soon afterwards it began to appear in the town of Valetta. At first, the medical men contended it was not the plague—the people kept their sickness secret, for fear of being removed to the lazaretto, clamoured against the precautions, and did all they could to thwart them. The disease spread, not only through Valetta, Floriana, and the adjoining towns, but to many villages.

Whilst the plague was raging in Malta, the efficacy of strict



seclusion was exhibited in some striking instances, as at Marseilles and Moscow. The Augustine convent stands in an airy part of Valetta, near the top of one of the main streets, much above the level of the sea, and the greater part of the city, and in a clean and open neighbourhood—its interior accommodations are spacious and airy. When the plague first broke out in Valetta, the strictest precautions were used by the inhabitants of this convent to prevent all communication with the town. At length, however, a servant, contrary to the regulations, went into a part of the town where the disease prevailed, and purchased clothes which were supposed to be infected. Soon after his return, he confessed what he had done, on which he was immediately shut up, together with one of the brotherhood, who volunteered to attend him. Both of them were taken ill and died of the disease, but no other person in the convent suffered. When the plague was at Malta in 1675, Cavallino, who described it, states that all public establishments, which cautiously shunned intercourse with the community, enjoyed perfect exemption from the disease; as did the prisons and monasteries; besides all the vessels in the harbour. In the late plague it was the same—the hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, the prison, and several public offices and private houses, which early adopted and steadily kept up a rigid system of insulation, were not less fortunate.

In a large building in the town, the ground-floor was divided into seven separate apartments, occupied by as many Maltese families, while the upper stories were used as a military hospital for patients affected with common diseases. While the plague was raging in Malta, it penetrated into the ground-floor, destroyed the inhabitants of four of these apartments, and, in the other three, two only of each family escaped. While this was going on below, the sick tenants of the upper stories were shut in—all communication was cut off—and every individual among them escaped the disease, although it was raging in the habitations round about the hospital, and penetrating from the lower to the upper stories. Dr. Greaves, whose house was within a few feet of the hospital, and on whose authority this fact is stated, related it to Dr. M'Lean when he was at Valetta, and led him over the hospital; but no mention has been made of it by this *impartial* historian.

Thus (to return for a moment to the commencement of the plague) we find it attacking, first, two sailors in a vessel which had come from a city where the plague was prevailing; and next, after



her arrival, the captain of the same vessel, together with his servant—then the family of Borg, nominally a shoemaker, but really a smuggler—his children, his wife, himself, and his father—the mid-wife who attended his wife whilst she was ill of the plague—a young woman who slept in her house—a kinsman who entered her chamber, and touched her body—the child of the master of a wine-house near the quarantine harbour, where many persons resorted, and among others the servant of the Health Office who guarded the San Nicolo in the harbour—some of the guards of the San Nicolo themselves, with whom Borg the smuggler had frequent dealings. While the plague was attacking, successively, the above-mentioned persons, it appears, by official statement, that there were no other individuals affected with it in any other part of Malta. Is the reader not satisfied with this evidence? That there was any communication between the crew of the San Nicolo and the family of Borg, there is no decisive proof, nothing but a rumour that a piece of cloth had been conveyed from the vessel to Borg's house. Great stress has been laid on this; and the belief that the San Nicolo communicated the plague to Malta, in spite of this defect in the chain of evidence, has been loudly scoffed at as unphilosophical credulity. What evidence are we to expect under such circumstances as these? The parties, be it remembered, are a crew under quarantine, and a cunning smuggler—both under penal restrictions which they daily and hourly, but of course secretly, elude by frauds and falsehoods. What other evidence of communication between such people, so circumstanced, are we to expect, unless the Devil on Two Sticks had been employed as a spy, and, from his lofty station, at night had actually seen the piece of cloth conveyed from the San Nicolo into the boat, from the boat to the shore, from the shore over every inch of ground, till it arrived at Borg's house, and then observed the unfolding of the cloth, and the escape of the contagious vapour? As this is a point of considerable importance, because the same defect in the chain of evidence, which is here complained of, will be found in the other histories of the plague which we have laid before our readers, we shall run the risk of tiring them with a few remarks.

Now suppose that a vessel, with the plague among its crew, arrives in the Thames, and comes up the river. There is a rumour, but no proof, of communication with the shore; but a week afterwards, the disease breaks out in the contiguous neighbourhood, in the house of a smuggler, and in an ale-house frequented by sailors;

and after spreading among the relations and friends of the first sufferers, as well as those who have had casual communication with them, is found in London, where it has not been for one hundred and sixty years, gets into the houses of deluding doctors, and deluded legislators, and carries off thousands and tens of thousands of the inhabitants; if such a calamity were speedily to follow the arrival of a vessel under such circumstances, who would doubt that the disease had been communicated from the vessel to the metropolis, because he could not track every footstep that it had taken; because, in other words, he could not do that, which the lapse of a single week, a single day or hour, in carelessness and unsuspicion, would make it impossible to do? But, although the case may strike us more by being brought near home, it is not really stronger than the introduction of the plague into Malta; for Malta had been free from it almost as long as London has. Let not the people of London hug themselves on their long immunity; Malta had been free for one hundred and thirty-seven years, and Moscow for nearly one hundred and seventy.

The plague of Malta, in 1813, either arose from a noxious state of the air, or it was introduced by contagion imported by the *San Nicolo*. Now granting that there is some difficulty to be overcome in either supposition, which is the greater—to believe that the crew of the *San Nicolo* had communicated with the family in which the plague first appeared in Valetta, with which family the captain was intimate, although this communication cannot be proved; or that the air of Valetta, which had continued free from plague for nearly a century and a half, should, on a sudden, assume a pestilential condition, and that by an accidental coincidence, about a week after the *San Nicolo* sailed into the harbour with the plague on board? To find a difficulty in believing the former, but none in believing the latter, is to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

The foregoing accounts afford ample proof of the two propositions which we set out by stating; and, consequently, that the plague is communicable from person to person; but they form not one-twentieth part of the evidence to this effect. It is impossible, in the space allotted to us, to do justice to this part of the subject. We might content ourselves with stating, that every competent person who had opportunity of observing this tremendous malady, had come to the conclusion that it was contagious, and that there had been fewer dissentient voices than might have been

expected, considering the nature of the subject and the wanderings of the human intellect; but as general statements produce little impression, we shall trouble our readers with a few instances.

Dr. Murdoch Mackenzie resided at Constantinople and Smyrna for twenty years, in the middle of the last century. During this time scarcely a year passed in which there was not some appearance of the plague in one or both of these cities. In 1751 it broke out at Constantinople, raged with great violence, and carried off, as it was estimated, one hundred and fifty thousand people. His observations on this disease he communicated from time to time, by letters, to Dr. Clephane and Dr. Meade; they were read before the Royal Society, and are published in the forty-seventh volume of the 'Philosophical Transactions.' The following extract from these letters will show the facts which he observed, and the opinions which he formed on the causes of the plague:

'I can't see any other apparent cause of the virulency of the disease this year, beside the occasion of greater communication. In the months of February, March, April, and May last, the distemper was so strong at Cairo, as appears by letters from the English consul there, that no doors were opened for three months. In the mean time there arrived here in May last, four ships laden with Cairo goods, which goods and men being landed, spread the infection over all the city at once, after which one conveyed it to another by contact. In the village where we lived there died only sixty persons of the plague. The French ambassador's palace, next door to us in the village, was infected, because five of his people went at midnight to a bawdy-house, where the father Demetry, the mother, and daughter, at the same time had the plague, and died of it afterwards, all three; so that two of his Excellency's servants were infected by them, one of whom died and the other recovered, and is still living, after taking a vomit, some doses of the bark mixed with snake-root and Venice treacle, by my advice. We found this last time, and upon all such occasions, that whoever kept their doors shut ran no risk, even if the plague were in the next house, and the contact was easily traced in all the accidents which happened among the Franks. Comte Castellane had, for three years running, persons attacked in the same room, in the months of July and August, notwithstanding all possible precaution used in cleansing the room, and even whitewashing it.



‘ At last, by my own advice to his Excellency, grounded upon the ‘ above theory, he built a slight counter-wall, since which there has ‘ been no accident in that room, now five years ago. I could give ‘ so many such examples as “ *delassare valeant Fabium.*” ’

Orræus, who was physician to Catherine, Empress of Russia, and was sent to advise during the plagues at Yassy and Moscow, states, that the most common mode of contracting the disease was by contact. Samoilowitz, surgeon to the military hospital at Moscow, who had also extensive experience of the plague in Poland, Moldavia, and Wallachia, before he witnessed its tremendous ravages in Moscow, says, in the preface to his ‘ *Mémoire sur la Peste,*’ ‘ it is certain ‘ that the plague is developed and propagated only by contact.’ All the assistant-surgeons who were employed under him (fifteen in number) took the disease, and all died excepting three; while the physicians who walked among the sick without touching them, generally escaped. When Mr. Howard, in the year 1785, went abroad to visit the principal lazarettos in France and Italy, he carried with him a set of questions concerning the plague, drawn up by Drs. Aikin and Jebb, which were to be submitted to the most experienced practitioners in the places which he visited. When he returned, Dr. Aikin methodised and abridged the answers, and the result is given in Howard’s celebrated work on the lazarettos of Europe. We have no room for it, and yet it deserves to be read by all those who are in search of information on the subject. ‘ They ‘ all,’ says Mr. Howard, ‘ in the most explicit manner concur in ‘ representing the plague as a contagious disease, communicated by ‘ near approach to, or actual contact with, infected persons or ‘ things.’

During the late war (as we used to call it) in Egypt, now a quarter of a century ago, the medical officers both of the French and English armies had ample opportunities of observing the plague, and they almost unanimously came to the conclusion that it was a contagious disease. Dr. Edward Bancroft, a man of unquestionable learning and talent, yet prone enough to dissent from received opinions, accompanied the British army during part of the Egyptian campaign. His testimony is particularly important, because, by his essay on the yellow fever, which he believes not to be contagious, he had shown himself fully prepared to adopt a similar opinion about the plague, if he had met with sufficient proofs of it. He thus expresses himself :

‘The facts which prove the necessity of actual contact with some infected person or thing to communicate the plague, are so numerous, and many of them so notorious, that it must be unnecessary for me to enter upon a detail of them, after what Dr. Russell and others have published, and after the experience of the British army in Egypt, which invariably demonstrated this necessity, by showing that all those who avoided contact invariably escaped the disease, whilst those who did otherwise, in suitable conditions, were very generally infected. Nor was there, so far as I have been able to discover, any instance, in the French Egyptian army, of a communication of the disease without contact, though the physicians to that army who have written on the subject do not, I believe, positively assert the impossibility of such communication.’

Mr., now Sir James M’Grigor, surgeon to the Indian army in Egypt, during the Egyptian campaign, in his medical sketches of that expedition, gives the following account of the arrangements at the pest-houses, and their result :—

‘In the pest-houses of the army thirteen medical gentlemen did duty, who in the Indian army might be said to have had the post of honour. They were Mr. Thomas, Mr. Price, Mr. Rice, Dr. Wayte, Mr. Grysdala, Mr. Adrian, Mr. O’Farrel, Mr. Whyte, Mr. Dyson, Mr. Anglé, Mr. Moss, Dr. Buchan, and Dr. Henderson. In order to take from our medical gentlemen in the pest-houses some of the most dangerous part of the duty, it was my wish to procure some of the Greek doctors of the country to reside in the pest-house, to feel the pulses there, draw blood, open and dress buboes, &c. The most diligent search was made for those people, and very high pay was promised to them, but we could tempt none of them to live in our pest-houses : a plain proof of the opinion which they entertain of the contagious nature of the disease. The thirteen gentlemen first mentioned were those only that were directly in the way of contagion, for it became their duty to come into contact with the infected, and seven of them caught the infection and four died. To the atmosphere of the disease all the medical gentlemen of the army were exposed, as they saw and examined the cases in the first instance ; but, except from actual contact, there never appeared to be any danger.’

The medical officers of the French army came to similar conclusions, Desgenettes, chief physician to the French army in Egypt,

in his '*Histoire Médicale de l'Armée d'Orient*,' thus sums up his opinion on the subject of the plague:—

'The plague is evidently contagious, but the conditions of the transmission of this contagion are not more exactly known than its specific nature. The dead body has not appeared to transmit it—the animal body in a heated state, and still more in a state of febrile moisture, has appeared to communicate it more easily; the contagion has been known to cease in passing from one bank to another of the Nile; a simple trench made before a camp has been known to stop its ravages; and on observations of this kind is founded the useful insulation of the Franks, the practice of which has been sufficiently detailed by different travellers.'

Baron Larrey, the principal surgeon to the French army, and the distinguished author of the '*Memoirs of Military Surgery*,' states a similar opinion:—

'But however strong,' says he, 'may have been these affections (moral), their effects cannot be compared to those which resulted from the communication of the healthy with the sick, or to the effects of contact with contaminated objects. We may be convinced of this truth by the ravages which the plague made in the year 9, (1801,) among the Fatalist Mussulmen; \* \* \* it were to be wished that, on the first days of the invasion of the plague its true character had been presented to the army. This would have diminished the number of victims, instead of which the soldier, imbued with the opinion which was at first propagated, that this disease was not pestilential, did not hesitate to seize and wear the effects of his companions dead of the plague. The pestilential germ developed itself in these individuals, who often sunk under the same fate. It was only when they had gained a perfect knowledge of this disease, that many preserved themselves by the precautions which were indicated.'

Dr. Sotira, another of the physicians of the French army in Egypt, relates the following striking circumstance:—

'In the seventh year of the French republic, about eighty medical officers died of the plague. In consequence of this mortality an order was issued to employ Turkish barbers in the pest-houses to dress the patients, and to undertake all the medical treatment which required actual contact. The result was that during the



‘next two years only twelve of the medical officers died of the plague, but half the Turkish barbers caught it.’

Thus far have we drawn our information from medical men, eye-witnesses of the facts which they relate. But as there are many persons whimsical enough to think that medical men are the worst judges, and that the less a man knows on a subject, the more likely is he to come to a right conclusion about it, we will give them the experience and the opinion of the late Sir Thomas Maitland, who witnessed the rise, progress, and cessation of four different plagues in the Mediterranean; those of Malta, Gozo, Corfu, and Cephalonia. In a letter to Lord Bathurst, dated Corfu, April, 1819, which was published at length in the ‘Morning Herald’ of June 29th, 1825, and is remarkable for its practical good sense and manly spirit, he states it as his firm opinion that the plague is taken only by contact. ‘I have invariably found,’ says he, ‘that preventing contact stops the disease, and that so long as contact is permitted it uniformly increases. If the absence of contact stops the plague, the allowing of contact must be the cause of it.’ On this belief he acted in organizing measures for the suppression of the disease. Although Sir Thomas Maitland was bred neither as a logician nor as a physician, it would be difficult for the former to reason better, or for the latter to act more skilfully. In the system of police by which he invariably succeeded in suppressing the plague—‘the exclusive object of the troops was to prevent contact; every family was shut up in their own houses, fed at their own doors, and sent to the lazaretto the moment the disease appeared. The soldiers employed in this service scarcely ever contracted the disease. In the few instances that occurred, and they were extremely few, it was uniformly observed of each soldier that took the plague that he was loose in his conduct, and neglectful of the necessary precautions. Those, on the contrary, who attended to these precautions never took it. They were sent into several villages, many of them with streets but a few feet wide; they did the severest night-duties of all kinds in these villages; they lived in exactly the same atmosphere as the inhabitants, yet they never caught the disease, though it was raging in the villages; they were stationed within a yard or two of camps and hospitals in which the plague was raging with great violence, and they never caught it; and lastly, they were exposed to all those hard duties, which in all infectious diseases are known to give a pre-disposition

‘to the most violent and fatal type of the prevailing disease, and yet they never caught the plague.’

We pause for want of room, not for want of matter ; for we have not produced one-twentieth part of the trustworthy evidence on record. On this part of the subject there is a perfect glut of proof, in examining which the mind gets so inured to the most decisive facts, that its sense of evidence becomes blunted, and it often puts aside proofs, as feeble and inconclusive, which, on any other occasion, would strike with instantaneous conviction. But enough has been said on this head to make out our first two propositions ; namely, that those persons are most liable to the plague who approach those affected with it, and that those generally escape the disease who avoid those affected with it. This is enough to prove that it is communicable from person to person ; we have no other proof of the contagiousness of the hooping-cough, scarlet-fever, and, in the experience of the present generation, of measles. But we shall proceed to the third test of a contagious disease, inoculation, and inquire whether the plague can be communicated artificially, like the small-pox and cow-pox. Under this head we must not expect very abundant evidence. People consent to the inoculation of small-pox because they can generally have it only once in their lives, and because, by so doing, they substitute a disease which is fatal only once in some hundred cases, for a disease which is fatal in one case out of four. There are not the same temptations to submit to the inoculation of the plague ; for, even if experience should prove that inoculation diminished the force of the plague as much as it diminishes that of small-pox, it would not afford security from subsequent attacks. We must not expect, therefore, that many persons should have been so rash as voluntarily to inflict this disease on themselves. But a few such there have been, and we proceed to relate their experiments.

During the campaign in Egypt in 1801, the French troops were much depressed by their dread of the plague. To convince them that their alarms were unreasonable, Desgenettes attempted to inoculate himself with the disease, but to secure himself from the danger of the experiment, he washed the part with soap and water. We will give his own account of this experiment, from the failure of which such erroneous inferences have been drawn :

‘It was to restore the spirits and exhausted courage of the army that, in the middle of the hospital, I dipped a lancet in the pus of

‘a bubo belonging to a convalescent patient, and made a slight puncture in the groin and in the neighbourhood of the axilla, without using any other precaution *than washing myself with soap and water*. I had, for more than three weeks, two little points of inflammation, corresponding to the two punctures, and they were still very tender when, on my return from Acre, I bathed in the presence of the army, in the bath of Césareé. This incomplete experiment, of which I have been obliged to give some details, because of the noise it made, proves little, and does not refute the transmission of contagion, demonstrated by a thousand examples.’

Soon after this, Dr. Whyte, a medical officer in the English army, hearing that Desgenettes had made the experiment with impunity, but not hearing of the precaution which he had used, repeated the former, without the latter, in the pest-house at El Hammed, on the 2d January, 1802. He was an anti-contagionist, and wished to verify his doctrine by showing that the disease could not be communicated by inoculation. The experiment and the result are thus related in a letter from Mr. Rice, then doing duty in the pest-house at El Hammed, to Mr., now Sir James, McGrigor:—

‘Dr. Whyte came here last night, January 2d, 1802; soon after he came in he rubbed some matter from the bubo of a woman on the inside of his thighs. The next morning he inoculated himself in the wrists with a lancet, with matter taken from the running bubo of a sepy.’

In subsequent letters Mr. Rice states, that ‘Dr. Whyte continued in good health on the 5th, and all day on the 6th, till the evening, when he was attacked with rigors and other febrile symptoms.’ He continued to have shiverings, succeeded by heat and perspiration, much affection of the head, tremor of the limbs, a dry black tongue, great thirst, a full, hard, irregular pulse, a great debility, and great anxiety. ‘He still persisted that the disease was not the plague, and would not allow his groins or arm-pits to be examined.’ He became delirious on the 8th, and died on the 9th, in the afternoon.

Dr. Valli was an Italian physician, who resided for some time in Turkey. He distinguished himself by a work on the plague, and has since, we believe, died of yellow fever, to investigate which he went to the West Indies. During his residence at Constantinople, he is known to have made experiments on the inoculation of the



plague, and in the 'Journal de Médecine,' for May, 1811, we find the following statement, which the editor says he received from one of his correspondents. Valli diluted the pestilential matter with small-pox matter, or with the gastric juice of frogs, or with oil. This compound he called his pommade. If a Mussulman came to consult him for an ophthalmia, he ordered him some of his pommade to rub upon his eyelids; if another came complaining of a pain in the bowels, he ordered some of his pommade to rub upon his belly. In this rascally way he gave the disease to thirty persons. These facts M. Valli is said to have communicated to the Medical Society at Geneva, 'and doubtless,' says the reporter, '*he will one day publish them in detail!*' Valli, however, never did publish them, probably ashamed of the result, for it is said that these experiments went to such a mischievous extent, that the Turkish government at length interfered, and arrested, not Valli, but a pharmacopolist, who vended the pommade, burnt his drugs, and cut off his head.

We have now made out our three propositions—the first two by overwhelming evidence—and the last, by all the evidence which the nature of the proposition would lead us to expect, and of which the least that can be said is, that it furnishes strong ground for belief. We pause, therefore, and ask, whether there is not sufficient reason for believing that the plague is contagious, to justify us in acting upon this supposition—to make it unjustifiable to act upon any other? Considering the terrific nature of this disease, one would suppose that the bare possibility of its being contagious would induce us to act on that supposition, and that men would lay down as a maxim, 'Take it for granted that it is contagious, till you are 'certain that it is not.' But when we consider the immense mass of evidence for the foregoing propositions, the clearness and distinctness with which they are made out, the small number of dissentient voices, and the tremendous importance of the stake at issue, one would suppose it impossible that there should be men not merely incredulous enough to dissent from this opinion, but mad enough to wish to act on their dissent. Yet such is the fact.

'However indisputable the fact of the plague being contagious may be deemed by modern physicians, it may be remarked, that it has been strongly opposed as often as the subject of quarantine has fallen under the deliberation of the legislature; and the public at such times have been constantly pestered by an inundation of

'pamphlets which, without advancing anything new, merely retailed arguments which have long before been refuted.'

These are the words of Dr. Patrick Russell, physician to the British factory at Aleppo, about the year 1760, so applicable to the present state of things, that they might seem to have been written to-day, and with express reference to it. The Levant Company, finding the quarantine laws inconvenient, resolved, a few years ago, to take a medical opinion upon the necessity of the restrictions which they imposed. They accordingly selected and sent to Constantinople a physician of the name of M'Lean, a gentleman well suited to their purpose, who, although he knew nothing of the disease by experience, was thoroughly convinced that it was not contagious, and consequently that the restrictions were as unnecessary as they were inconvenient. Going out with these previous opinions, which we suppose we must not presume to call prejudices, he found an experience of *seventeen days* sufficient to satisfy his mind, and he has ever since been incessantly active in propagating his belief. Zeal and activity are the virtues of a sect, and Dr. M'Lean with his few followers are entitled to the praise of possessing them; in the shape of petitions to Parliament, articles in reviews, paragraphs in newspapers,\* and speeches in Parliament, they have kept their view of the subject incessantly before the public, and the result has been, that the legislature has appointed Committees of Inquiry on the subject,† and ultimately consented to a modification of the quarantine laws.

We proceed, therefore, to inquire what reasons have been discovered sufficiently weighty to set aside the experience of so many generations, and of so many witnesses, together with all the inferences and precautions to which they have led. Those reasons are

\* It is amusing to notice the things on this subject produced in the daily papers. The 'Morning Chronicle' for September 7th, 1829, which is now lying before us, contains an account of a sitting of the Royal Academy of Sciences, at Paris, in which a M. Lassis, an unbeliever in the contagiousness of the plague, is represented as saying that 'he denied the existence of contagion in every species of disease, excepting only the measles and syphilis!' Then the small-pox and cow-pox are not contagious—diseases which we can propagate at will by the point of a lancet, with matter which we can see and feel? Where will the folly of man stop?

† 'Report from the Select Committee on the Doctrine of Contagion in the Plague.' 1810.

'Second Report from the Select Committee appointed to consider of the Means of Improving and Maintaining the Foreign Trade of the Country. Quarantine.' 1824.

be found in Dr. McLean's work 'on Epidemic and Pestilential diseases,' in his evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons, and in a dissertation on the subject by a writer in the *Vestminster Review*.\*

By way of introduction to the discussion, it is first laid down that, on the question of contagion, medical men are the worst judges, and that the best are 'men of general science, whose minds 'are accustomed to weigh evidence,' but who are unacquainted with, and *consequently* unprejudiced on the subject. The only reason given for this remarkable, but very convenient proposition, is, that the students of medicine are the slaves of authority, which, in after-life, as physicians, they seldom outgrow; but if it be common for the student to be oppressed by the authority of eminent teachers, it is not impossible for the ignorant to be deceived by the misstatements of plausible reasoners. The question of contagion, like every other, requires two qualifications in those who are to pronounce a judgment upon it; a knowledge of the whole truth as to matters of fact, and a capability of reasoning rightly upon that knowledge. It is obvious that men of science who know nothing of medicine can possess only one of these qualifications; and a sufficient reason why they must be incompetent judges is, that although they can appreciate what is neat in point of statement, and plausible, or even accurate, in point of reasoning, they are no judges whatever of what is true in point of fact. Hence, when they listen to a man who is little scrupulous about the accuracy of his facts, they are entirely at his mercy. It requires no great sagacity to perceive that the real motive for this appeal to those who are not physicians is, not because they are likely to be the best judges, but the most docile listeners—because they are likely to detect the errors of their teachers. It is easy to argue triumphantly about law with a physician, about physic with a lawyer, about theology with either—in short, on any subject with any person who knows nothing about it.

From this introduction we pass to the first argument produced to prove that the plague is not contagious, which is, that it is not governed by the laws of contagious, but of epidemic diseases. This argument, which is announced with great parade, explained most elaborately, and referred to again and again as the corner-stone of the system, is an attempt to lay down the laws by which contagious,

\* See Nos. V. and VI.



and those by which epidemic diseases are governed; and then, having ascertained by what laws the plague is governed, to deduce whether it is an epidemic or a contagious disease. This is amazingly well suited to take in the 'men of general science,' the minds 'accustomed to weigh evidence;' for it has a logical air which they can readily appreciate, whilst it reposes upon facts of which they are entirely ignorant. If the reader will take the trouble to compress and comprehend it, he will find that it comes to this:—

Contagious diseases (as small-pox, measles, and scarlet fever) are very uniform in their symptoms and duration—affect a person only once in his life—the patient is not subject to relapses—and they may be propagated at all times and seasons. On the contrary, epidemic diseases are very irregular in their symptoms and length—appear and disappear at certain times of the year—are most prevalent in certain countries, or even neighbourhoods—may affect a person repeatedly in life, and the sufferer is liable to relapses. Now, as the plague is very irregular in its symptoms and length—appears and disappears at certain seasons—is most prevalent in certain countries, and even neighbourhoods—can affect a person repeatedly—and as relapses occur—as the plague has all these qualities in common with epidemic diseases, it is plain that it must be an epidemic and not a contagious disease.

Now, the first sophism discoverable in this argument is, that the contagious or non-contagious nature of a disease is here made a question of inference to be determined by reasoning, which in truth is a question of fact to be determined by experience. Let any man who has the smallest pretensions to understanding say *which* is the right mode of discovering whether or not a disease is contagious—to find out that it is uniform in its symptoms and progress—that it affects a person only once in life—that when convalescent he is not liable to relapse—and thence to *infer* that it is contagious—or to go among the sick, to observe and watch the way in which it spreads, and thus to *ascertain* whether it is contagious. When Gall first broached his craniological doctrines in Germany, they were ridiculed on the stage—a master is represented hiring his servants according to the shape of their skulls—he feels their heads—finds the bumps which constitute a good servant—infers that they are sober, honest, and industrious—hires them *without characters*, and in the end finds them drones, profligates, and thieves. The mode of proceeding, which in this instance was only an imagined absurdity, is absolutely

practised by Dr. McLean and his followers in judging of the contagiousness of diseases.

But not only is the question resolved by reasoning which ought to be resolved by experience, but even in the conduct of the reasoning there is a fresh sophism, or rather blunder. One class of contagious diseases, the eruptive fevers, is assumed to be the only class—its laws are described, and every disease which is not governed by them is inferred not to be contagious; whereas the question at issue is, whether the eruptive fevers are the only contagious fevers? If to determine whether negroes were human beings, we were to take a particular people, as Europeans, and, describing among their qualities a fair complexion, were to infer that because negroes were not fair they were not human, would not this be begging the question? yet this is precisely the line we adopt when, in a dispute about what are contagious fevers, we take the eruptive fevers as the only examples.

Another argument against the contagiousness of the plague is, that it breaks out at a certain season, lasts for a certain time, and then subsides, and remains dormant till the favourable season returns. On the other hand, we are told that ‘contagious diseases can be propagated at any time, and among any number of persons.’—‘That a disease depending upon a specific contagion must prevail alike in all seasons, in a pure as well as in an impure atmosphere, amongst the rich as readily as amongst the poor; and that the only influence of these adventitious circumstances would be to render the disease more or less severe.’ We could not produce a stronger instance how unsafe it is to trust these discussions into the hands of those who are ignorant of medicine; for no well-educated physician could ever have penned such a statement, and no competent judge could ever for a moment have listened to it.

Take the diseases which are unquestionably contagious:—What is the fact with hydrophobia? Sometimes it is so rare, and excites so little attention, that dogs run about without restraint, and the public almost forget that there is such a disease. At other times it is so prevalent, and the bite of dogs is so often followed by this terrific disease in man, that the public are kept in perpetual alarm; the walls are placarded with orders to tie up the dogs, and their appearance in the streets occasions the timid to fly, and the mischievous to follow them with stones and clubs. As the contagion is always in existence, and the animals susceptible to it always alive,

whence comes it that it is more active and diffusive at one time than at another? It is plain that, beside the specific contagion, there is a diffused cause which renders the disease more communicable at one time than at another. Whether it is a peculiar condition of the atmosphere, as is commonly believed, and if so, how it acts, whether by rendering the poison more active, or the bodies of animals more susceptible to it, it is unnecessary for our present purpose to inquire. It is enough to know that hydrophobia, which 'depends on a specific 'contagion,' is not 'propagated equally at all times,' and does not 'prevail alike in all seasons.' The same fact may be stated, and the same inference may be drawn, with regard to the whooping-cough. Parents well know that at one time it is almost a forgotten disease, at another time they can scarcely go into a family without coming in contact with it; and experienced physicians know that it generally prevails in cold damp seasons, as the end of autumn and winter, and is little heard of in the warm dry days of summer. Measles are generally most prevalent in spring, and disappear in summer.

'The scarlet fever,' says Sydenham, 'though it may happen at 'any time, yet it most commonly comes at the latter end of summer.'—'The measles of 1670,' says the same distinguished physician, 'began *very early*, that is, at the beginning of January, and, 'increasing daily, came to their height in March; afterwards they 'gradually decreased, and were quite extinguished in the following 'July.'

With regard to the small-pox and cow-pox, it is necessary to distinguish between the artificial and the natural propagation of contagious diseases. It is quite true that contagious diseases, which are propagated by inoculation, can, generally speaking, be propagated in this way 'at any time, and among any number of persons;' but leave them to be propagated in the natural way, and it is quite notorious that they spread readily at one time, and scarcely at all at another. The small-pox has been so much restrained, first, by the introduction of inoculation, and, secondly, by that of vaccination, that we of the present day know little of its natural course; but before the introduction of the one, and the discovery of the other, the small-pox used to lie dormant—then appear—rage for a time—and then subside—like epidemic diseases. Sydenham, who lived before the time of inoculation and vaccination, describes the small-



pox as at one time appearing rarely, or not at all; then beginning to show itself at the approach of the vernal equinox; spreading more and more every day, becoming epidemic about autumn, abating on the coming on of winter, returning again in the following spring, and prevailing till checked by the subsequent winter. The accounts which this admirable physician gives of the small-pox in different years read exactly like accounts of an epidemic disease.

Boerhaave, speaking of the same disease, says, 'this disorder is generally epidemic, beginning early in the spring, increasing in summer, abating in autumn, ceasing almost entirely the following winter, to return in the spring, and reign again in the same order.' Van Swieten, who, though a commentator on Boerhaave, wrote from experience, after describing Sydenham's account of the rise, progress, and subsidence of small-pox, adds, 'I have seen many variolous epidemic constitutions, and they agreed in most things with the observations of Sydenham.' Sydenham, Boerhaave, and Van Swieten, saw the small-pox before inoculation was introduced, when it was propagated in the natural way, and we see it used to run its course just like epidemic diseases.

Sydenham lived, and was practising in London, in the year 1665. He saw something of the dreadful plague of that year, and he had frequent opportunities of seeing the small-pox propagate itself in the natural way. Now it is curious, that so far from there being any striking difference between the progress of the plague, and the progress of contagious diseases, as the anti-contagionists assert, he selects these two as strikingly similar in their mode of appearing and disappearing.

'That such a disposition or texture happens to the mass of the air as occasions various diseases at different times, is manifest to every one that but considers, that one and the same disease kills an infinite number of men at some certain seasons, and at another time seizes only here and there a man, and goes no farther; and this is very apparent in the small-pox, especially in the plague, the argument of this chapter.'

When Dr. Jenner first disclosed his discovery of vaccination, and everybody was anxious to verify it by experiment, the London physicians could procure no matter, because, as they were told, the disease was extinct.

'Unfortunately,' says Dr. Woodville (the physician to the Small-

Pox Hospital), 'at the time Dr. Jenner's publication appeared, no 'cow-pox matter could be procured, for the disease then had become 'extinct, nor was it expected to return till the spring, the period at 'which it usually affects the cows. Towards the latter end of 'January last, I was informed that the cow-pox had appeared 'among several of the milch-cows kept in Gray's Inn Lane, and 'about four-fifths of them were eventually infected.'

It appears, therefore, that contagious diseases prevail much at one time, and little at another, and, consequently, that two things are requisite for their ready propagation; the one, the contagious matter itself, the other, a diffused cause, supposed to be a state of the atmosphere favourable to its action. Let it never be forgotten, that this is the case with diseases unquestionably and notoriously contagious, and, therefore, that when it is found to be the case with the plague it can be no objection to the belief of its being also contagious. Are the anti-contagionists ignorant of these facts? In this, and other instances which we shall have occasion to notice, the error is so extraordinary, that it is really difficult to refer it to ignorance. But we go on.

The anti-contagionists, describing epidemic diseases, say,

'People are attacked, not in proportion as the inhabitants of the 'affected mix with those of the unaffected places; but, in proportion as the inhabitants of unaffected expose themselves to the 'air of affected places. The visits of the sick to unaffected places 'is [are] followed by no increase of disease; the visits of the inhabitants of an unaffected, to an affected place, is [are] attended 'with a certain degree of sickness. On their removal from a 'noxious to a pure air, the sick often rapidly recover; but they do 'not communicate the disease to the inhabitants of a pure atmosphere; in the history of all the epidemics which have ever prevailed, 'in all parts of the earth, there is not on record a single example of 'the communication of the disease from the sick to the healthy in a 'pure atmosphere.'—*West. Rev.* No. V. p. 145.

Here are, put only in several forms, two propositions:—First, that when the people of healthy districts visit the affected districts, they take the disease, not from the sick, but from the air. Secondly, that when the sick move from an affected to a healthy district, they speedily recover, and do not give the disease to others. Let us take these propositions, and try them in their application to the plague.

If those who come out of a healthy into an affected district, took the disease, not from the sick, but from the air, then those who avoided the sick would be as liable to the disease as those who approached and touched them. Is this the fact with the plague? so notoriously the contrary, that all modern observers have come to the conclusion that absolute contact, either with infected persons or infected clothes, is necessary for the communication of the disease. Hence the security of those who, while the plague is raging, shut themselves up in the very town in which it is raging, and avoid all intercourse with the sick. Why did the religious communities at Marseilles, which practised this seclusion, escape? Why did the Foundling Hospital at Moscow, which was strictly shut up, escape, while the Foundling Hospital at Marseilles, which admitted a patient with the plague, was swept of its population? Why at Malta, in 1813, was the plague kept out of the Military Hospital, although it was raging in the ground-floor, while, in the houses in the immediate neighbourhood, the disease was not only getting access to the ground-floors, but climbing to the very garrets? Why did the French medical officers, in Egypt, die in crowds, whilst they dressed the patients, and as soon as the task of touching and dressing them was put upon the Turkish barbers, why was the mortality transferred from the surgeons to the barbers? Why did the troops employed by Sir Thomas Maitland to suppress the plague at Malta escape the disease, although they were, not only in the same district, but in the same streets in which it was raging? In short, for we might have saved ourselves this recitation of facts, why is the practice of seclusion, or shutting up, as it is called, practised by the European factories in places liable to the plague, an effectual preventive of the disease? If it is said that those persons keep aloof in the healthy districts, then are the healthy and sick districts often separated by a distance only of a few feet—then is the definition of a healthy district, a place in which the healthy shut themselves up? then is a man able to plant himself in the midst of a sick district, draw round him a magic wand, and say to the noxious atmosphere, So far shalt thou come, and no farther? Moses's rod had not more power over the waters of the Red Sea, than is here attributed to human volition over a contaminated atmosphere.

Now for the second proposition, that 'the visits of the sick to unaffected places is [are] followed by no increase of disease. In the



‘ history of all the epidemics which have ever prevailed in all parts of the earth, there is not on record a single example of the communication of the disease from the sick to the healthy in a pure atmosphere.’

Our readers will bear in mind that the writer’s own description of a pure atmosphere is, the atmosphere of unaffected places ; otherwise, if, when the visits of the sick to unaffected places are followed by the propagation of the disease, that fact be taken as a proof of the impurity of the atmosphere, it would be reasoning in a circle—a mere juggle, instead of an argument. Now, taking the proposition in this sense, a more daring and outrageous misstatement was never penned. Excepting only places where the disease is endemic, nearly all the plagues which have ever devastated the world have followed the visits of the sick to unaffected places—the only difficulty in producing ‘ a single example,’ is the difficulty of choosing among a multitude. The plague of Malta in 1813 followed the visit of the sick in the San Nicolo from Alexandria, an affected place, to Malta, an unaffected place, unaffected for one hundred and thirty-seven years. The plague at Gozo followed a visit from Valetta, an affected place, to Gozo, an unaffected place, an elevated little island, only a few miles long. The plague at Marseilles in 1770 followed the visits of the sick from Seyde in Syria, and from Tripoli, affected places, to Marseilles, an unaffected place, unaffected for more than half a century. The plague of Moscow in 1771 followed the sick from Choczin, an affected place, to Moscow, an unaffected place, unaffected for more than a century and a half. So far from being in want of a single instance, we have no room for the number which press on us ; but we will give one which may serve better than any on a larger scale, and in more populous districts, because no stress can be laid on the impurity of the air. When the plague was raging in London in the year 1665, the visit, not of the sick, but of the clothes of the sick from London, an affected place, to a village on the Peak of Derbyshire, an unaffected place, was followed by the appearance of the disease in the pure air of that remote and elevated spot. We find the following mention of this fact by Mr. Howard, in his account of the principal lazarettos of Europe.

‘ When the plague raged in London, in the year 1665, the infection was conveyed by means of a parcel of clothes to the remote village of Eyam, near Tidewell, in the Peak of Derbyshire. In

‘ this place it broke out in September, 1665, and continued its ravages upwards of a year, when two hundred and sixty of the inhabitants had died of it. The worthy rector, Mr. Mompesson, whose name may rank with those of Cardinal Borromeo of Milan, and the good Bishop of Marseilles, at its breaking out resolved not to quit his parishioners, but used every argument to prevail with his wife to leave the infected spot. She, however, refused to forsake her husband, and is supposed to have died of the plague. They sent away their children. Mr. Mompesson constantly employed himself during the dreadful visitation in his pastoral office, and preached to his flock in a field where nature had formed a sort of alcove in a rock, which place still retains the appellation of a church. He survived; and the entries in the parish register relative to this calamity are in his handwriting. In the fields surrounding the town are many remains denoting the places where tents were pitched; and tombs are still existing of large families entirely swept away by this devouring pestilence.’—p. 24.\*

The statement, then, is utterly false; but that is not all—it is equally inconclusive. If we were to admit that the removal of the sick to places unaffected with the plague is often followed by speedy recovery, and by no spread of the disorder, we should only admit what is true with regard to diseases unquestionably contagious, as the small-pox. Van Swieten, who saw the small-pox when it was propagated only in the natural way, writes thus:—

‘ I have sometimes observed large towns to be free from the small-pox, whilst it raged epidemically in the neighbouring villages; and, on the contrary, some large towns universally visited by the complaint, whilst the villages in the neighbourhood remained in health,

\* The anti-contagionists have been in the habit of affirming that the plague had never penetrated into Arabia. We have received the following communication from Dr. Benjamin Babington, who came overland from India, and in whom the soundest sense and the most cautious observation are hereditary qualifications. It bears immediately on this part of the subject. ‘ The plague had never been in Arabia till the middle of 1815, when Mahomed Ali Pasha of Egypt sent his troops across the Desert into Arabia, on an expedition against the Wahabees. On this occasion it visited Yambo and Jedda, and crept down the coast as low as Gamfada. Each of these towns lost nearly half its population. When I was at Milo, in the end of 1815, a vessel came into the port having one person on board ill with the plague. This vessel was ordered by the Greek authorities to quit the harbour. She put into Mitylene, where those in command being less cautious, allowed the sailors to land, several of whom had by this time become infected. The disease immediately afterwards broke out among the islanders, and many fell victims to it.’



‘ though the inhabitants of both mixed daily with each other. I also perfectly remember that I once removed two patients of mine from a place where the small-pox raged to a large town, without propagating the contagion there; and many excellent physicians, with whom I have cultivated a friendly commerce with respect to medical knowledge, testify that they have observed the same thing.’

A similar fact is mentioned by Sir John Pringle, in his ‘ Account of Diseases of the Army,’ where it is stated that ‘ the small-pox being carried into the camp by some new raised recruits, quickly disappeared without becoming general, although it is notorious that other camp-diseases are but too apt quickly to spread themselves.’ Again, the late and learned Dr. Odier, in a letter from Geneva to Dr. Haggarth, says—‘ We have frequently inoculated at Geneva a great number of children in the years during which the small-pox was not epidemic; these children have gone out every day, even after the eruption had broken out—they have been in the streets, and in the public walks—they have communicated freely with other children susceptible of the infection, and, not only the small-pox did not spread, but there did not occur, to my knowledge, any distinct instance of the communication of the disease from one individual to another in the streets or promenades.’

When Sir James M‘Grigor was at Bombay, the small-pox was raging in the houses contiguous to the Barracks, yet not one adult or child in the regiment was affected by it. In Africa, when the Harmattan blows no contagion is active, not even that by inoculation of the small-pox.

We pass on to an observation which deserves more attention, because it is one of the few which are not founded in misstatement. It is this—that the plague, when raging violently, sometimes suddenly abates at the very time when the supposed sources of infection, contaminated persons or contaminated things, are most numerous. In the great plague of London in 1665, Sydenham states that ‘ the number of deaths, which had increased to some thousands in one week in August, decreased and almost stopped at the latter end of November.’ It must be obvious to the thoughtful reader, that this circumstance, on which so much stress is laid, is only another instance of a general accident of contagious diseases which we have already weighed and considered, viz., that they are propagated readily at one time and with difficulty at another. This has generally been explained by the supposed existence or non-existence of some quality



in the atmosphere favourable to the propagation ; if the atmosphere can suddenly assume such a quality, it is easy to understand how it may as suddenly lose it. If some changes are capable of increasing, other changes may be capable of diminishing the prevalence of a disease. There is no more mystery in the sudden diminution than there is in the sudden increase in the number of the sick, and there is no mystery in either to one who duly considers that two things are required for the ready diffusion of a contagious disease—the one the contagious matter or effluvium ; the other, a particular state of the atmosphere favourable to its action.

Other circumstances may contribute to the decline of contagious diseases. A man must have had little experience in medicine who does not know that some persons are more susceptible of disease than others. When a contagious disease first breaks out, it of course seizes the most susceptible subjects—they are the tinder, which takes fire readily and burns rapidly. The disease spreads easily and widely, as long as this combustible matter is abundant, but as soon as it is consumed the fire burns dimly, and at length goes out. Something, too, may depend upon this, that the contagion may lose its pungency by passing through many individuals, and at length wear out. The vaccine matter fresh from the cow produces a more painful disorder than after it has passed for some time through the human subject by inoculation ; and if vaccination be now less effectual than formerly as a preventive of small-pox, it may be because we have neglected too long to vaccinate with matter taken immediately from the animal. When syphilis was first brought from America to Europe it was so virulent and terrible, that we can hardly recognise in the descriptions left of it by our ancestors, the comparatively mild and tractable disease of the present day.

The last argument of the anti-contagionists which we think entitled to any notice is, the circumstance that, when the plague is prevalent, so many persons are exposed to the contagion without being affected. This argument is founded upon the supposition, that because almost everybody is susceptible to the contagion of small-pox, measles, and scarlet fever, therefore almost everybody must be susceptible to the contagion of the plague, if it be contagious ; in other words that the laws which govern the eruptive contagious fevers, must be the same as govern all contagious fevers. This argument we have already destroyed, by observing that it takes for granted the very point in dispute, that the eruptive contagious

fevers are the only contagious fevers. If because many who are exposed to the contagion of the plague escape it, we are to infer that the exposure is not the cause of the plague, let us see to what conclusions we shall arrive. Of those who are bitten by a rabid animal, many are not affected by hydrophobia—therefore, the bite of a wild animal is not the cause of hydrophobia. Of those exposed to a cold and variable season, many are not affected with pulmonary inflammations—therefore, cold and variable weather is not the cause of pulmonary inflammations. Of those oppressed by the intense heat of the season, many are not seized with the cholera—therefore, a hot season is not the cause of cholera. But a truce to this; the causes of disease are not things which invariably produce them, but which produce them sufficiently often to leave no doubt that they are the causes. Everybody is susceptible to small-pox, measles, and scarlet fever; but then, having had them once, he never has them again. Many people are not susceptible, at least for a time, to the plague; but then, having had it once, they may have it repeatedly—singleness of attack is a compensation for universal susceptibility—frequent insusceptibility is a compensation for the liability to repeated attacks. Nature, or rather Providence, abounds in those compensations.

We might now leave the subject, but there are a few statements of the anti-contagionists which it will be useful to notice, not as important in themselves, but as showing the structure of the minds of those who advance them; how little they are to be trusted even in the statement of a fact, and how unfit they are as guides on so momentous a subject. A writer in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' alluding to the anonymous expositor of Dr. McLean's whims, says, 'it is true I know *nothing of the subject*, but the article appears to me to be *quite conclusive*.' It is impossible to put it more happily—the exposition does appear quite conclusive to one who knows nothing of the subject. The most potent arguments are facts, and when the teacher cares little, and the student is totally ignorant whether they are accurate or no, the business of conviction is an easy task. An instance or two will show what we mean.

'The small-pox secretes a contagious matter which is contained in its pustules—the measles secretes a contagious matter which is contained *in its vesicles*. Apply a portion of the fluid contained in the pustules of the one and *the vesicles of the other* to a healthy

‘person, it will excite in the latter the same train of symptoms as existed in the individual in whom the contagious matter was secreted.’—*West. Rev.*, No. V, p. 138. ‘And again: The small-pox is never without its pustules, the measles is never without its vesicles.’—*Ibid.* p. 139.

In reading these passages, what ‘man of general science,’ accustomed to weigh evidence, would suspect that the measles has no vesicles; that though vesicles *sometimes* occur during the progress of measles, they are by no means the essential or characteristic eruption of the disease; the characteristic eruption of measles is a rash, containing no matter to inoculate with, and no one ever thought of producing the measles ‘by applying a portion of the fluid contained in its vesicles.’ Dr. Francis Home, of Edinburgh, who, in the year 1759, attempted to inoculate the measles, expressly says, ‘there was no matter,’ and therefore he was obliged to employ the blood.’ Again,—

‘Were epidemic diseases really propagated by contagion, it could possibly be matter of controversy; the facts establishing the truth would be so clear, so numerous, so overwhelming, as to place it beyond all question. *Na one can doubt, no one ever did doubt, that the small-pox is contagious.* This alone must be sufficient to decide the matter in the judgment of every philosophical mind.’—*West. Rev.*, No. V, p. 147.

Now, we beg leave to inform the ‘philosophical minds’ to whom an appeal is here made, that some one did doubt that the small-pox was contagious; and that no less a person than the greatest physician England ever produced, Sydenham. He saw the small-pox when its natural mode of diffusion was not interrupted by inoculation or vaccination, as it now is, and yet this great man had no suspicion that it was contagious. In his time a belief in the non-contagiousness of small-pox was not only the medical, but the popular opinion. Gadbury, the astrologer, in his ‘*London’s Deliverance Predicted*,’ published in the year 1665, says, ‘I say, then, it (the plague) ought not to be deemed infectious at all, at least not more infectious than *small-pox*, scurvy, pleurisy, ague, gout.’ This blunder of the anti-contagionists has been well exposed by Dr. Macmichael, in his tract ‘*On the Progress of Opinion on the Subject of Contagion.*’



Misstatements, however, of the kind which we have just noticed, are not matter of surprise, for the argument is not addressed to medical men; it appeals from their judgment to that of men of general science acquainted with the laws of evidence. We come now to a different class, and we suspect that for the future even a knowledge of the laws of evidence may be found an inconvenient qualification in the men of science who are to decide the question. For example, we are told that 'it is the custom in Turkey for the relations of those who died of the plague, to wear the clothes of the deceased, or to sell them at the public bazaar; they are never destroyed, they are invariably either worn by the relatives or sold at the public market; *there is no instance on record of the disease being communicated by these means.* The persons who deal in the clothes are not infected, the persons who wear them remain free from the disease.'—*West. Rev.*, No. V, p. 160.

A naturalist who had affirmed that domesticated hogs were infested with a species of vermin which did not infest wild hogs, was asked how he knew it; whether he had combed all the wild hogs in the world? So we may ask whether the anti-contagionists have traced all the old clothes which are worn by the relatives or sold at the bazaar?

When Dr. McLean was examined before the Committee on contagion, he said,

'I used to walk into the city of Constantinople, even after I had the disease, and go through the thickest of the people, visiting the coffee-houses and other frequented places; nor was the disease by that means propagated.'

How does he know? did he inquire into the fate of all the people whom he had jostled in the streets, and sat by in the coffee-houses?

If we admit the fact that many people are exposed to the clothes of the sick without catching the disease, it proves no more than the fact that many are exposed to the sick themselves without catching it; and this we have already considered. Again, were the clothes of the dead worn during their illness? Were they worn during that stage of the disease which is infectious? To what extent had they been exposed to the air since the death of their owner? A lancet dipped in vaccine matter kept for a few days in the pocket, and then used for vaccination, with all the advantages of intentional immer-

sion in the contagious fluid, and careful insertion under the skin in the act of vaccination, is more likely to fail than to succeed in giving the disease; and hence the importance of bringing together the person to be vaccinated with the person from whom he is to be vaccinated, and performing the operation with fresh matter.

So much for the evidence in support of this sweeping statement, that 'there is no instance on record of the communication of the disease by these means:' but there is a little evidence against it.

'It is a notion,' says Dr. Russell, 'prevalent at Aleppo, that a plague cannot subsist in the city any considerable time without being imparted to the Jews. Many of that nation are employed as brokers and pedlars in most parts of the town, and numbers who deal in old clothes daily pass through the streets, purchasing their wares from all ranks of people. In this manner it is supposed the distemper is transported to the Jewish district.'

And again, says Dr. Russell,—'*if substances tainted by the sick should be conveyed into secluded retreats, and persons happen to be seized with the distemper, can it be ascribed not to contagion but to terror? and the instances here alluded to are not the creation of fancy, but strictly consonant to repeated experience in Turkey.*'

In another place Dr. Russell says,—'I met with *many* instances of the disease being communicated by coverlids, carpets, and apparel, purchased from infected houses.'

Dr. Pugnet, who was with the French army in Egypt, states that at Jaffa, an apothecary dying of the plague, his neckhandkerchiefs were divided among, and worn by, fourteen persons: *all these* were seized with the plague, and had buboes in their necks.

The anti-contagionists assert that the plague never was in Holland, although the Dutch have no quarantine laws. That singular but laborious writer, Noah Webster, has collected accounts of no less than fourteen plagues which ravaged Flanders and Holland at various periods, in one of which, at Delft, in the year 1557, the dead bodies were so numerous that the people fought for the coffins. As to the absence of quarantine laws, if this were true, how happens it that as soon as England only relaxes hers, and thereby approaches the state of law said to exist in Holland, the several powers of the



Mediterranean turn round upon her, and compel every vessel from her ports to perform quarantine before entering their ports?—a conduct which they do not observe towards the vessels of Holland, which undergo no quarantine at all. On inquiring of the Dutch authorities in this country, we learn that the Dutch have quarantine laws, but that, when a vessel arrives from the Levant with a clean bill of health, they are not always strictly enforced. Dr. Granville, who seems to have taken much pains to ascertain the fact, gives the following as the result of his inquiries, in his letter on this subject to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Dutch trade in the Mediterranean, in former times, suffered much from the Algerine cruizers; in consequence of which, the Dutch merchantmen trading in the Mediterranean were, from the early ages of the Republic, directed to assemble at Leghorn, from which port they sailed, under convoy, to Holland. This arrangement leads to considerable detention at Leghorn, which, although originally intended as a security against pirates, served, in point of fact, the purpose of a quarantine, Leghorn being, as is well known, the port, of all others, in which the quarantine regulations were the most perfect, and most rigidly observed. In addition to this, whenever any Dutch vessel quitted a port where the plague was raging, the Dutch consul at that port refused her a '*passe-port de mer*,' without which she was not safe in sailing through the Mediterranean, nor was she admitted into Holland.

It would be an endless task to go through what may be called the collateral absurdities in the reasoning of the anti-contagionists—yet we must mention one or two instances. Thus, it is said that the doctrine of contagion is selfish and inhuman, and prevents the due performance of the duties of the healthy to the sick; while the doctrine of epidemic diseases remedies the evil. Yet the same persons say,—

'People are attacked (with the plague) in proportion as the inhabitants of unaffected expose themselves to the air of affected places. The visits of the inhabitants of an unaffected to an affected place is [are] attended with a *certain* increase of sickness.'—*West. Rev.*, No. V, p. 145.

Is it possible that they should not see that their objection applies more strongly against this doctrine than against that of contagion;



for if the latter teaches us to avoid the *sick*, the former teaches us to avoid the *very air* which surrounds the sick. The latter says *only*, do not touch a patient affected with the plague, or the clothes which he has worn; you may go within a certain distance of him—observe his symptoms—prescribe for him—carry him medicine and refreshment. But the latter says, if you go into the chamber, or the house, or the very neighbourhood in which the disease is raging, you expose yourself to danger.

Another absurdity is, that the doctrine of contagion was a popish trick, and never heard of before the year 1547, when it was invented by Pope Paul III., as an excuse for removing the Council of Trent to Bologna. Two learned foreigners, Dr. C. F. H. Mark and Dr. Omodei, of Milan, have just published most satisfactory refutations of this statement. That of the former is entitled '*Origines Contagii*;' that of the latter is contained in the twenty-second volume of the Milan '*Annals of Medicine*;' of both an elaborate analysis is given in the '*Edinburgh Medical Journal*.' It was hardly necessary to expend so much talent and learning as these gentlemen have displayed, upon a notion unworthy of serious refutation; for who does not see that whether the plague was contagious or epidemic, it was equally a reason for removing the Council from Trent? A man removes from a marshy district, not because ague is catching, but because the spot is unhealthy; not to avoid the sick, but the exhalations of the place. Besides, as far back as Thucydides and Aristotle, through a long succession of historians and poets, down to Boccaccio, the notion is traced that pestilential diseases are contracted by communication with the sick. Dr. McLean is a little sore on this subject, and he has a curious mode of defending himself. When reminded in the Committee of Boccaccio's account of the plague at Florence, in 1348, in which the healthy are represented as flying from the sick, to avoid catching the disease, he says,—

'It is necessary to ascertain the precise date of its being printed, in order to appreciate the authenticity of the doctrines as being those of the writer, or as being introduced by interpolation of editors or commentators.'

What must be the condition of that man's mind who could suspect interpolation on such a subject?

In an act of parliament of our Henry VIII., in the year 1540,

seven years before the imaginary popish fraud, barbers are prohibited from practising surgery, and surgeons from practising barbery,\* 'because persons using surgery often take into their cures and houses such sick and diseased persons as have been affected with the pestilence, &c.—do use or exercise barbery, as washing or shaving, or other feats thereunto belonging, which is very perilous for infecting the king's liege people, resorting to their shops or houses, there being washed or shaven.'

Are acts of parliament subject to interpolation?

But hear what may happen to a non-contagious disease. The typhus fever of England, they say, is not contagious, and is only a milder form of the plague of the Levant. The following case is related by Dr. M'Lean's chief disciple:† a poor family in London, consisting of four persons, were attacked with malignant typhus fever; they all lay in the same bed, in a close and dirty apartment, where they were visited by two physicians; the one, whenever he entered the room, went to the window, threw it open, observed the sick at a distance, and stayed a short time—he escaped the disease. The other took no precaution, examined the skin of the patients closely, and inhaled their effluvia and breath—he was seized with the disease, and died of it. What is the inference? that, although the disease was communicated from the patient to the doctor, and although he caught it and lost his life by approaching the sick, yet that the process was different to what it is in contagious diseases, and therefore it is not a contagious but a contaminative disease!! It would be an insult to the understanding of our readers to offer one comment on such reasoning.

When Dr. M'Lean was examined by the Committee on the doctrine of contagion, he told them that his opinions were founded on an experience of *seventeen days*; but requested them 'to recollect how little the value of experience might be commensurate with its duration—that the plague was generally fatal in nine cases out of ten—but that he could cure it in *four cases out of five*.' When asked to what extent he had tried this triumphant mode of treatment, he said upon *one* patient, and that was himself. When reminded that Dr. Whyte had inoculated himself with the plague, and had died of it, he said 'that he took it *by a coincidence*.'

\* Russell on Plague.

† See Westminster Review, No. VI.



When told that the Turks, who used no precautions to avoid the plague, suffer much more from it than the Christians, who avoid it, he said that he *did not believe it, because he did not see the grounds for it*. When asked upon what grounds he concluded that the Turks and Mahometans suffered less than the Christians? he said, *not from actual observation, but from the nature of things, and because there was no evidence to the contrary*. He said, he would not believe that a person had the small-pox twice, even if he were to witness it; *he should distrust the evidence of his own eyes*. When asked at what periods of the year the plague at Moscow in 1771 had prevailed and declined? he answered, that his impression was that it began at the *usual epidemic season in northern latitudes, and ceased at the usual time*. Being thereupon asked what he called the epidemic season at Moscow? he rejoined, that it was the same, or nearly the same, as in this country, *judging from the pestilence in 1771*. So that the plague at Moscow was epidemic because it raged at the epidemic season; and that was the epidemic season, because the plague raged at that time. These were a few of the precious statements with which Dr. M'Lean favoured the Contagion Committee, and we know not which to wonder at most, the mind of the man who uttered them, or the patience of the Committee who could listen to them. This gentleman has been described, by an enlightened member of parliament, as one of those extraordinary persons who will be pointed out by the finger of the future historian! Judging by his writings and his actions, we conclude that he is a man of great self-confidence, zeal, and perseverance; these qualities, when combined with ability, judgment, and knowledge, form the improvers of science, the master-spirits of their age, the benefactors of their species; but when combined, as they often are, with wrong-headedness, and a heap of inaccurate and ill-digested knowledge, they form very absurd, and often very mischievous men. Every age affords examples of both; the latter are not uncommonly mistaken for the former; but time corrects the blunder.

We are tired of refuting errors and exposing absurdities which would require no refutation or exposure, if those who are to decide were well acquainted with the facts of the question. We call on our legislators, however, before they consent to abolish the system of quarantine, to pause and reflect on the tremendous importance of the stake; to consider that these barriers were built up by our experienced ancestors, and that we have no experience who are about to

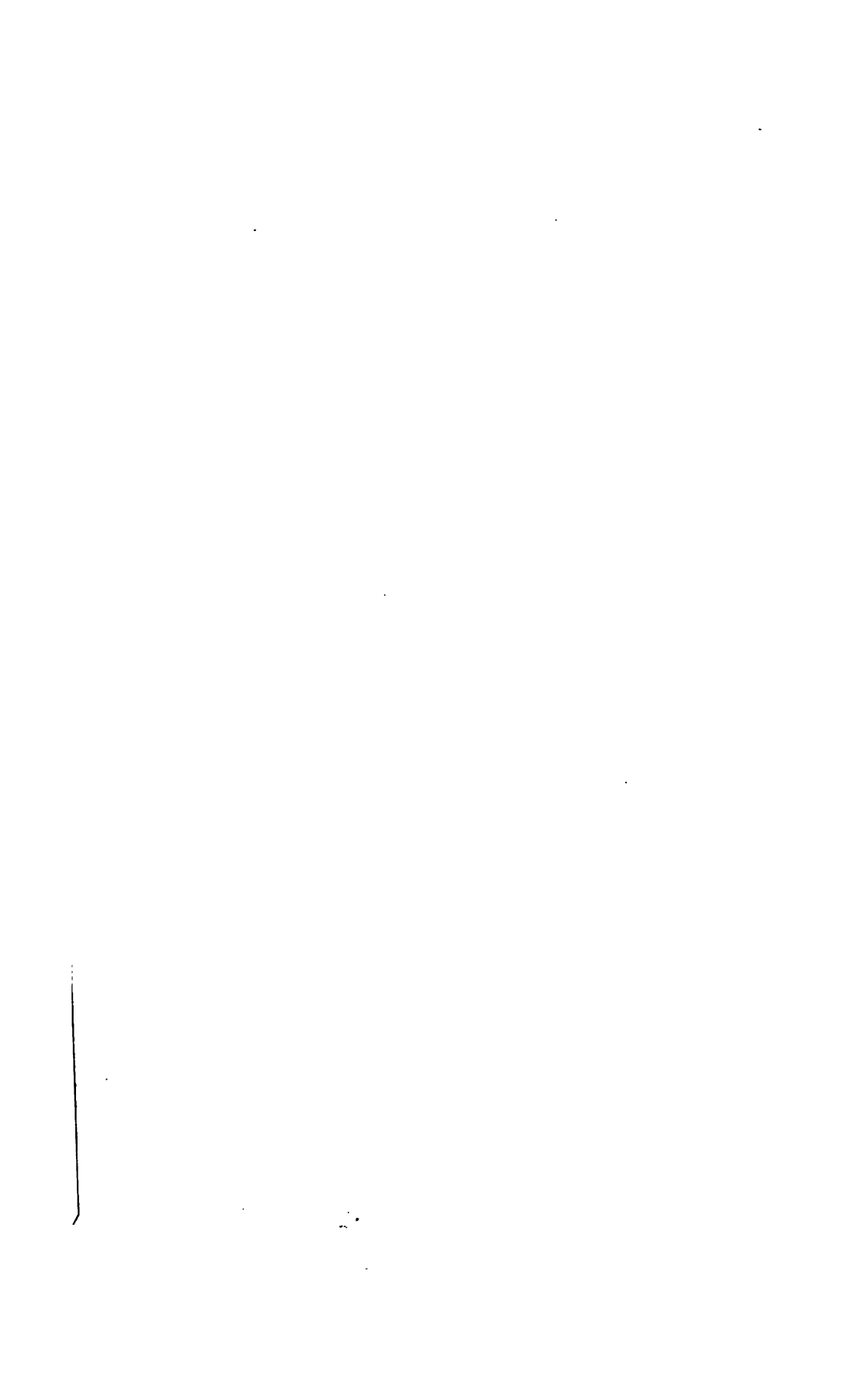


pull them down; that the experienced powers of the Mediterranean behold with astonishment the opinions which have been broached in England on the subject, and, in consequence of the relaxations to which our Government has already consented, have refused to admit our vessels into their ports without a previous quarantine. We beg them to remember how often, in their own families, they act on the supposition of contagion, when the evidence amounts only to a probability; and we entreat them to legislate for the nation on the same cautious principles as guide them in their own homes.

We remember, a few years since, a newspaper story, with which we will conclude. An old fellow, a chemist, appeared before the Lord Mayor, begging leave to show, experimentally, that detonating balls were quite harmless, and drawing half a pound of gunpowder out of his pocket, in which he meant to explode the balls, the Lord Mayor exclaimed loudly against the experiment; but at length, on his earnest entreaty, and strong assurances, permitted him to try it with a small quantity of powder. To the chemist's utter discomfiture the powder exploded, on which he protested that it *ought not* to have done so.

If Parliament should be as yielding as the Lord Mayor, we shall have the plague running over London, and Dr. M'Lean protesting that it ought not to have spread, or, perhaps, supporting the sufferers with the consolatory reflection that they are dying, not of a contagious, but of a contaminative disease.

THE END.







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